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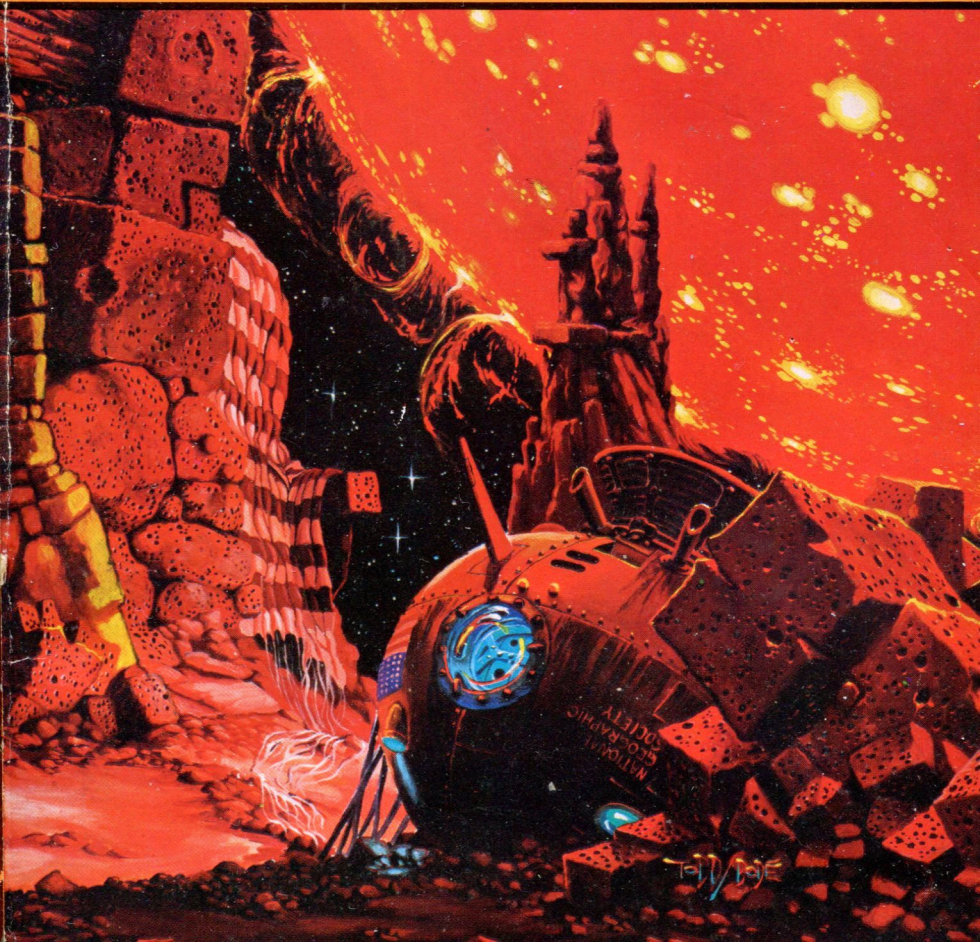
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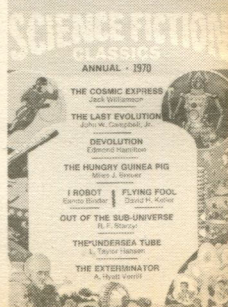
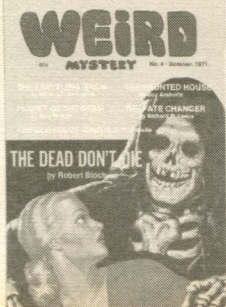
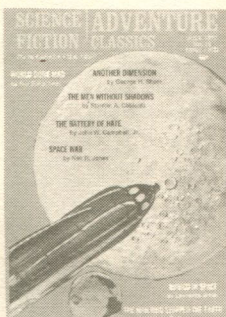
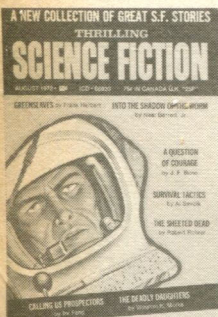
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JULY, 1972

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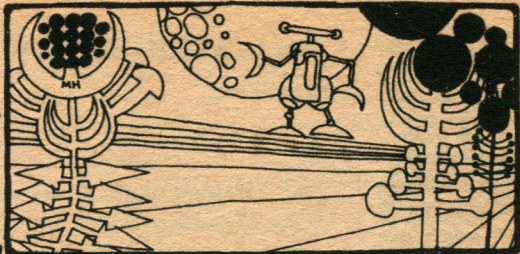
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**TED  
WHITE**

## **EDITORIAL**



LAST ISSUE in this space, I remarked upon the lust for "respectability" which occasionally overcomes us all—and the all-too-frequent comeupance we've received at the hands of the "mainstream" critics, like Prescott of *Newsweek*.

This issue I want to discuss one aspect of a semi-organized drive for "respectability" on the part of the Science Fiction Writers of America and the fans who put on each year's World Science Fiction Convention.

But first, by way of easing into this subject, I must backtrack to last month's issue of our companion magazine, *FANTASTIC STORIES*. In that magazine I devoted my editorial to some of the problems currently facing the World S.F. Convention—Worldcon, for short—and published a letter from Erwin S. Strauss on the subject.

Strauss (who was replying to an earlier letter published in *FANTASTIC*) had a number of important points to make, chief among them, the following:

"In the past, a simple desire to have a Worldcon in one's own city was enough to elicit the level of effort required. In the last three or four years, however, the amount of labor and the period of time over which it has to be sustained have meant that only those with a deeper incentive have undertaken to bid for a Worldcon. There are a number of forms such motivation could take. You point out the cases of coin-collecting and comic fandom. Here the organizers are the hucksters, and the motivation is promoting their wares. In addition to the obvious

shortcomings of such a system, science fiction fandom has an additional problem in that there isn't enough money involved in huckstering to support a convention; hence cons that have depended on huckster support have had to shift to a comics or movie orientation to make a go of it. Another alternative would be to follow the example of many mundane conventions and have full-time professional (paid) convention organizers. At least one recent Worldcon promoter has seriously discussed the prospects for 'turning pro,' and hiring out to local fan groups on a free-lance basis. We may eventually be reduced to that, but I think not for a while at least.

"The problem boils down to one of TANS-TAAFL: the people who put on conventions will have to be compensated for their efforts in some way; and, in lieu of either of the above alternatives, the form that compensation has taken has been in the egoboo of handling large sums of money. For the moment, this may be as good an arrangement as any; however, it is not without its side effects. One of these has been the increasing emphasis on the financial and organizational aspects of fandom, in the operations of local fan clubs as well as in conventions. In some cities, with the tacit consent of local fans, an Establishment has arisen consisting of those persons willing to undertake the increasing organizational and financial demands made by the fans. The time may be fast approaching for fandom to make a basic choice: either broaden the base of the Establishment through more and more fans doing more of the 'dirty work,' or make



honest men of those who *are* doing it by paying them in cash instead of ego-boosting authority. If this decision is not faced, fandom may go the way of politics in a Machine-dominated city, where the average citizen has two choices: accept things the way they are, or get out. The option of making even limited changes will be reserved to those willing and able to devote thousands of man-hours in faithful service to the apparatus.

"Looking back over what I've written, I may have overly dramatized the situation. But it's worth thinking about. Let's face it: the consequences of 'letting George do it' can happen here in fandom."

SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTIONS started out small and intimate. In the late 1930s, when fans first began holding conclaves, conferences and conventions (the first Worldcon was in 1939), there were no more than one or two hundred active sf fans, all of whom knew each other at least moderately well.

By 1952, and the Chicon II, the thousand-mark for attendance was shattered. By the late sixties, the average Worldcon was drawing between 1,500 and 2,000 attendees, most of whom considered themselves fans, but few of whom could boast knowing *half* the total membership even vaguely.

This continuing trend towards bigness has had a direct effect on the spiralling costs of the Worldcons. It is difficult to find more than one or two hotels in most cities with adequate facilities. These are usually new and expensive hotels. The amount of work which goes into planning such a convention and producing it has also multiplied. And, as attendance has gone up and prices have steadily spiralled upward, so also have the complaints grown. Many fans and readers of sf are students or otherwise on tight budgets (the recent recession has done nothing for these people either), and feel themselves being squeezed right out of participation. Since the Hugo awards are voted

upon by the Worldcon members and announced at the Worldcon banquet, fans who want a voice in the Hugos (and this voice is the basic right of all sf fans and readers, providing they join the Worldcon) feel they are being frozen out by excessively high membership fees. And, to put it bluntly, the continuing growth of the 'Worldcons' attendance is leading the annual convention straight toward disaster.

In the June FANTASTIC I pointed out a number of ways in which costs can be shifted so that the Worldcon member is not required to cover such a large proportion of them. These include the use of advertising revenues to pay for all pre-convention expenses (which are largely confined to progress reports, membership cards, ballots, and similar printed items which go out to the membership in mailings), and a more equitable method for selling space to the hucksters (who have, up to now, paid a token sum for table-space which may pull in hundreds of dollars for the hucksters over the convention weekend). These reforms can be and should be instituted *now*. There is no practical reason why membership in the Worldcons cannot be restored to the 1967 level of \$3.00 or so (present rates run up to \$10.00).

A little-known fact is that the convention committee is *not* required to pay for the convention facilities it uses—these are donated, gratis, by the hotel in return for the rooms it rents to convention members. Further, all hotels are willing to bargain on the room-rates offered to con-goers—although not all committees have displayed much savvy in the negotiations. (I'm told that last year's Worldcon in Boston—after promising low convention rates in its bidding presentation—accepted much higher room-rates from the hotel for what was already the most expensive Worldcon in history.)

Further, the published explanation for raising the membership fees progressively as the convention grew closer, and charging

(Continued on page 125)



*Christopher Anvil returns after too long an absence from these pages (he last appeared herewith "The Low Road," September, 1970) with a story about two groups of con-men—one of whom capitalizes upon—*

# THE UNKNOWN

## CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

Illustrated by BILLY GRAHAM

VAUGHAN NATHAN ROBERTS, at the patrol ship's viewscreen, studied the rotating close-up image that looked exactly like a patched-up Stellar Scout ship. He glanced at Hammell, who was watching from the aisle beside him.

Hammell nodded.

"If we have to fool them, that should do it. But they may not have noticed us."

Morrissey, coming up the aisle, ducked to avoid knocking himself out on the highly polished, practically invisible mirror-like cylinder that ran along the ship's axis at head height. He leaned over to take a look at the screen.

"Ouch, a Stellar Scout ship. —Is that what we look like now?"

"Correct," said Roberts. "What's wrong with it?"

Hammell said, "It's accurate."

"Oh," said Morrissey, "I know that. But the Stellar Scouts are fanatics for new equipment. Won't it scare off these bloodsuckers if they see that ship?"

"The idea is to confuse them. —And to provide ourselves with justification for whatever we choose to use. We want, if possible, to hit them without their knowing what happened. If they *did* detect us, *then* we want them to think they're up against pure amateurs, but dangerous amateurs. —Amateurs with *teeth*."

"H'm. I think I see it."

Hammell explained, "If they see an Interstellar Patrol ship, *then* they'll clear out. A thief that starts into a house at night and spots a lion waiting in there is going back out the window as fast as he can get through it. He'll rob some other place. But if—instead of a lion—he sees a friendly wolfhound lying there banging his tail on the floor. . . . Well, the thief just might decide to stay there and clean out the place."

Morrissey considered it, and nodded.

"The lion would be sure to eat him up. The wolfhound has plenty of teeth, but maybe he can be fooled."

"Right," said Hammell.



Roberts added, "And we don't want to trail this crew around from place to place while they polish up their technique. We want to end them now."

Up the aisle toward the bow of the camouflaged Interstellar Patrol ship, Nels Bergen, at the spy screen, cleared his throat.

"Boy, this gang is *tricky*."

"What now?"

"Let me switch it to your screen."

Roberts said, "Go ahead."

The viewscreen at once showed, standing, a dazed-looking rough-hewn figure; and, seated behind a small table, hands spread in glowing good nature, a pink-cheeked clean-cut individual radiating honesty and friendly sincerity.

The big rough-hewn man was saying, "You don't know what this means to us, Dr. Fellows. This is a rich planet, but we've run into one thing after another. First the local life-forms. Then the winters. And now this. We've heard of the pox, of course. But we didn't think there was any cure. Your coming like this is like—like manna from heaven!"

"Dr. Fellows" smiled modestly. "My boy, the pleasure is mine."

"You've saved our lives!"

"What better reward could I ask than that?"

"Some day we'll be able to pay you back!"

"Don't think of it."

"We will. I mean it! This planet is rich. All we have to do is to get the ore out, and for that, we only need our health and more time to work. We're used to work here. And you've saved our health."





"I know. But I don't ask any reward. Your good fortune is *my* reward."

The rough-hewn figure looked away a moment, overcome with emotion.

At the desk, "Dr. Fellows" sneaked a quick glance at his watch. A look of irritation flitted across his face, to vanish in smiling good nature.

The big man passed a corner of his leather sleeve across his eyes, took a deep breath, and said, "Nevertheless, we *will* repay you. And if there is ever anything you need, just call on us."

"My boy, doing good is all the reward I ask. —I only hope that the work I've been privileged to do here will turn out well. You see, there was so little time to diagnose, and so *very* little time to synthesize the curative agent, that scientific objectivity compels me to ask you again: Are you *certain* that there have been no unpleasant reactions?"

"*None*. No, sir. And after a day or two in bed, our people get up *cured*."

"Then I feel free to trust the cure, and shall stand ready in case the infection should reappear."

"You're going to stay around the planet, just in case it should break out somewhere else?"

"My boy, I consider it my duty."

The big man wrung the hand of the modestly beaming individual behind the desk, stood momentarily speechless with emotion, then went out.

The instant the door closed, the man at the desk let out his breath, slid out a panel above the desk drawers, and punched two of the panel's many buttons.

A few moments later, another door across the room opened up, and a small neat individual wearing a grey labora-

tory coat walked in, his expression solemn and serious. He glanced around piously.

At the desk, "Dr. Fellows" sat back. "I'm alone, Vank."

The look of pious solemnity vanished from Vank's face. A look of rapacity that seemed more at home there settled on his features.

"Where's the dummy?"

"Just went out, swearing to repay us."

Vank laughed.

"You know, Fox, we ought to—"

The pink-cheeked individual sat up.

"Until we're out of here, I'm *Dr. Fellows!*"

Vank winced. "Sorry. I was going to say, we ought to work this play on Tiamaz. *They could* repay us. Quick."

"I have a little something in mind for Tiamaz—some day. This wouldn't work."

"Package it a little different—"

"No. There aren't enough dummies on Tiamaz. They'd see through the whole thing like a plate of glass. There's something about the fresh air on these colony planets that restores the suckers' faith in human nature. You could only *hit* Tiamaz. This place, you can *milk*."

There was a rap on the same door Vank had come through, and "Dr. Fellows" called, "Come in!"

The door opened, to let in a tall worried-looking individual with a slip of paper in his hand.

Fellows leaned back, his face expressionless.

"Let's have it."

"The massometer reading checks. But strange to say, we have *nothing* on



the detectors."

"What's that mean?"

"Trouble."

"In what size?"

"The ship itself is small. On that basis alone, it could be anything, and the odds favor some local spacefreight rig, a retired spacer sightseeing in one of these toothless yachts, a prospector nosing around, or something on that level."

"Then what are we worrying about?"

"The detectors didn't pick it out."

"So?"

"Only the massometer found it."

"I'm waiting. What of it?"

"The thing was *invisible*."

Fellows sat up.

"The detectors couldn't see it, or *we* couldn't see it?"

"If we could see it, the detectors could see it. Better to put that the other way around. If the detectors couldn't see it, *we* sure couldn't. Unless it was a pure illusion."

"And the massometer wouldn't have picked up an illusion?"

"No, it sure wouldn't."

"You're saying there was visually nothing there?"

"Visually, optically, so far as radiation was concerned, the sky was empty. Nevertheless, a detectable mass passed overhead at moderate speed."

"How high?"

"As an estimate, three thousand feet."

"And moved on?"

"Correct."

Fellows sat back, frowning.

"This couldn't be some kind of freak warm-air mass—what do you call it? A—An inversion?"

The tall man smiled.

"It would have to be pretty heavy hot air. No. This was a material object."

"All right. You're the expert. Why should we worry about it?"

"Let me make a comparison. You open the door to your room. You walk in. You glance around the room. There's nothing there to be concerned about. You toss your hat toward the table. Before the hat hits the table, it bounces back from nothing. There's a heavy crash as something—nothing you can see—lands at the base of the table and jars the room." He paused to look quizzically at Fellows. "What's there to be worried about?"

"M'm," said Fellows. "I see." He sat back and swung his chair lightly from side to side. "Not so good. Who could this *be*?"

"There's only one outfit I can think of. I just hope I'm wrong."

"What outfit is that?"

"The IP."

Fellows came halfway out of his chair, his hands making abortive grabs at the desk, as if reaching for controls that weren't there. He let fly a string of livid curses.

Beside him, Vank looked confused. "What's the IP?"

As, on the screen, Fellows explained this in words of few syllables, Roberts looked up from the screen, to glance at Morrissey.

"Now we've got to convince them we've got enough teeth so they better leave us alone, but not so many they have to be afraid of us."

Morrissey shook his head.

"If only we'd stayed low. Their mas-



someter probably wouldn't have picked us out, if we'd been against some solid background."

Hammell, who had been piloting the ship at the time, said defensively, "Damn it, the screen didn't show anything!"

A familiar, maddeningly cool voice broke into the conversation.

"Incorrect. Their ship *did* show on the screen, but was not highlighted to call your attention to it. You overlooked it."

"But," said Hammell, "now we have this mess. The ship *should* have been highlighted!"

"Not at all. Members of the Interstellar Patrol are supposed to have some powers of observation. For a symbiotic computer, with its vast superiority, it is admittedly much easier to detect such objects; but, for the symbiotic computer to do *all* the work would lead to a further deterioration of the atrophied power of observation that the patrolmen *do* possess."

Hammell bared his teeth.

Morrissey murmured irritably, "Maybe *it* didn't see it, either."

Roberts called, "Bergen!"

"Sir?"

"You see the problem we've got?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you fix yourself up to be a happy-go-lucky but tough prospector with a couple of pals, just drifting around watching for whatever turns up?"

"Sure!"

"Take over."

Twenty minutes later, the patrol ship, disguised as a Stellar Scout ship, and the whole thing invisible, drifted

over a wooded hill, and descended toward a massive cruiser resting in the valley, partly hidden by big trees.

Roberts, at the spy screen, watched with Morrissey as Bergen went out on the hull, and called, "Ho! Hello, Space Force!" An instant later, he shouted in the hatchway, "They can't see us, Rick. Throw the switch!"

On the spy screen, Fellows was in the control room, glancing at the outside viewscreen. Bent over it beside him was the tall man who had warned him about the massometer. Fellows stared at the screen.

"Now we can see it. But who's the young kid on the ship? *That's* the IP?" He glanced around. "What kind of ship is it, Mape?"

The tall man straightened, scowling.

"The lines aren't right for the IP. But they're *tricky* . . . I don't place this rig."

"Whoever it is wants to talk to us. Does *that* fit the Patrol?"

"You can't tell. That's the trouble."

"Well, this isn't my line. You handle it."

Mape hit the outside speaker control. His voice boomed out.

"Hello, Spacer."

Bergen, in ragged jeans and torn shirt, looking greasy and unshaven, grinned and called out, "Hello, Space Force!"

"We aren't Space Force—this is a surplus cruiser, private-owned. What are you?"

The ragged figure glanced over the big ship, and looked impressed.

"Private? Sorry, I thought you were living off the tax on my finder's fees."

"Prospector?"

"Right."



"What's here to interest you?"

"Oh, we're just free-lancing around. Never know when you might run into something somebody might want."

"This planet has the pox. We're a private medical research ship. We think we've got it licked, but it's too soon to be sure. How many more ships do you have? You could spread this without meaning to, and come down yourself, if you're not immune."

"There's just one of us. We don't want to fool around with the pox. But we'll look around, see what our instruments show. You know how it is. Is the place quarantined?"

"We aren't that official. You been over our way before? —*Recently?*"

"Sure. Not long ago, at that."

"We didn't *see* you."

"You wouldn't," said the ragged grinning figure at the hatch of the smaller ship. "We're inconspicuous."

"Don't be too inconspicuous. You could get swatted by accident."

The grin moderated into a smile. It wasn't an unfriendly smile, but there was no sign of fear. Mape watched closely, eyes narrowed.

Bergen said, "Don't try to swat us, friend, accidentally or otherwise. We've got teeth at one end, and a sting at the other. You may get us, but you'll pay the price. You're big, but size isn't everything."

"I don't read your lines. What are you?"

"Salvaged Stellar Scout ship."

Mape gave an abortive reach of the hand for the controls, much as Fellows had done earlier. He gave a low mutter that the outside speaker duly transmitted. Then he had himself under control.

"Stellar Scout. *Are* you Stellar Scouts?"

"Not us. Just the ship. And you aren't Space Force, right?"

"Right."

"Okay. I just wanted to be polite. We'll be around. I don't know how long. We don't know what there is on this planet."

"It's settled and claimed."

"Not every inch of it isn't."

Mape grunted, then said pleasantly, "Well, nice of you to let us know who it was went over. Set down here beside us, and we'll give you some first-class refreshments."

Bergen grinned. "Thanks, but we've got a schedule. —See you."

Mape looked disappointed. "Good luck."

On the screen, Bergen waved, and the small ship moved off. Mape snapped off the outside speaker, and turned to Fellows.

Fellows said, "Well?"

"Well, what? There it is."

"What do you think?"

"As far as I can *tell*, they're all right. But that doesn't prove anything."

"Are they what they say they are?"

Mape shook his head. "Don't ask me that. Maybe so, maybe not. It sounded all right to me. Better yet, it *felt* all right. But that doesn't prove a thing."

"What's this Stellar Scout outfit? Are they as bad as the IP? I don't think I ever heard of the Stellar Scouts."

Mape watched the little ship move away on the screen.

"You've heard of PDA?"

"Planetary Development Authority? Sure."

"The Stellar Scouts are the advance



men for PDA. They do the first investigations into new parts of space, the first mapping, make the first reports. Sometimes, of course, private outfits beat them to it. But they're the official advance men for PDA."

Fellows looked unconvinced.

"Listen, when he said he had a Stellar Scout ship, you almost threw us into orbit. Let's have the facts."

"I'm giving you the facts. The Stellar Scouts don't bother anyone, but they're fanatics for new equipment. They aren't fighters, but they're always *equipped*. A buddy of mine ran into a Scout in a bar one time, and I don't know whether to believe half of that stuff, or not. But I tell you this: A Stellar Scout ship is poison. They're always loaded with experimental stuff, and no one knows *what* will happen when they fire it off at you. Maybe they'll blow themselves up. Or maybe they'll do things to you that you never dreamed could be done. We better just leave this one alone."

"Where does this leave us?"

"Don't ask me. You're the boss."

"Suppose that kid comes back and leans on us? Then what?"

"Then we fight. I'm not saying we have to fold up. I just say, leave him alone."

"But, for all we know, it *could* be the IP."

"Sure it could."

Fellows hesitated, eyes narrowed. Then he shook his head.

"I don't think so. It doesn't feel right for that. Okay, we'll go ahead. But we better keep our eyes open, and keep that massometer going."

Roberts turned from the screen to

Bergen.

"Good work. You fooled them."

Bergen grinned.

"What next?"

"First we have to be sure we know the exact details of what's going on here.—Morrissey?"

Morrissey, now working the spy screen, said, "We just got a view into another part of the ship. But it faded out again."

Hammell growled, "That's the trouble with these ultraminiature spy-circuits. They drift in like dust motes, but you have no control over *where* they drift. An air current, or a static charge, can completely foul up your arrangements."

Roberts said, "We still don't have any view into the aft section of that cruiser?"

"Nothing," said Morrissey. "Except— Here we go again. Mape is walking along the main fore-and-aft corridor, and the view goes along with him . . . *Agh*. There he goes out. All I can tell you is: The ship is heavily stocked with *something*; there are only the three men on board as far as I've seen so far; and they aren't medical researchers, believe me."

"Well, we'll hope we get something in there." He turned to Hammell. "It was a good idea to drift those circuits when you realized we were going to pass overhead."

Hammell nodded. "Thanks. But the computer's right. I *should* have noticed it."

Bergen said, "Still, we know *enough*. Just from what they say, we know that they're planning to rob the colonists, and we know that they have the colo-



nists fooled as to what's going on. You only need to listen to them for a few minutes, to know what the general idea is."

"Yes," said Roberts. "But we need more than that."

Morrissey called, "We've got a view into the aft end of the ship. —Take a look at this."

Roberts glanced at the screen, to see "Dr. Fellows" and Vank looking at what appeared to be a large sleeping bird—perhaps a falcon. The peculiar part of it was that the falcon was not asleep on a perch, but was in a transparent case, roughly the size and shape of an artillery shell.

"M'm," said Fellows, "we want to be sure this destructs properly. We could take things a little easier except for these prospectors nosing around."

Vank said confidently, "It will destruct. Don't worry."

"How about the case?"

"When you fire it out, the seals puncture to start a timed reaction."

"The thing doesn't burst into flame?"

"Nothing like that. Right now that case is a tough but glassy substance. The timed reaction reverts it to the crystalline state. At the slightest touch, it will crumble into fragments, then into a fine dust. There's no evidence—nothing."

Fellows nodded. "And the bird?"

Vank gave a modest laugh.

"The bird is long dead, and seeded with encapsulated spores of a very special decay organism. Don't worry about the bird."

"Ah . . . Is this decay organism likely to . . . cause trouble later? That's important to us, you know."

"Nothing that will bother us. The rot will sporulate, and the spores will be destroyed by the radiation from the planet's sun."

"Er—"

"Don't worry about it. This is *my* specialty."

Fellows let his breath out slowly.

"And the—the special dose?"

"The powder will drift all over this part of the planet. This bird is a predator. It can glide for hours. When the shell passes the top of its trajectory and starts down, the cover will blow off the rear of the shell, the bird will be shoved out, and the flight-control systems will take over. With every tilt of its wings, a little powder will drop out of the hollowed out seeding canisters."

Fellows nodded approvingly.

Vank concluded, "With a little luck, the colonists will be down with the pseudopox inside a week or two. Enough of them should die this time to make us even more popular with the ones we save."

"The important thing," said Fellows, "is to *leave no trace*."

Vank grinned.

"We want to leave them enough strength to work, too."

Fellows smiled in turn. "*Very true*."

Roberts glanced up from the screen, punched the button to the left of the glowing lens lettered "Smb Cmp," and asked, "What can you tell us about this harmless spore the dead bird will release on the planet in the process of rotting?"

There was a brief pause, then the symbiotic computer said, "Not to over-burden you with scientific details, the information given is inadequate to



pinpoint the precise nature of the organism—”

“In other words, you don’t know?”

“But,” the symbiotic computer went on, “the most common organism which appears to fit this inadequate description is the *diabolus rot*. While the spores are unusually sensitive to ultraviolet radiation, other forms of the organism are not. In certain of its forms, *diabolus* resembles the slime molds, forming exceptionally large swarms known as the *diabolus horror*. Save for its appearance, it is harmless, and, except for the psychological reaction induced by its appearance, it is even believed to be edible and nutritious.”

Roberts could feel his stomach turn over.

“It sounds nice. Now, what about ‘pseudopox’?”

“There is less doubt regarding this. There is a bacterium capable of producing all the external manifestations of planetary pox. It, too, is fatal, and, like the true pox, inflicts a heavier proportion of fatalities on girls and women. It is, however, comparatively simple to cure, and is a very rare disease.”

“Can Dr. Fellows spread pseudopox by sprinkling powder over the planet?”

“Yes. The disease can be spread by inhalation or ingestion of the organisms, and is highly contagious.”

Roberts sat back, frowning.

“Okay. Thanks.”

The symbiotic computer added, “In case you’re wondering, the larger moon will pass slowly above the ex-Space Force cruiser tonight, and will be high in the sky most of the night.”

“Exactly what I was thinking about,”

said Roberts. “Now, I would like to know how good you are at manufacturing mobile imitation biological objects. Objects that can stand close examination.”

The symbiotic computer’s voice held a note of modest creative pride. “What did you have in mind?”

“This is going to be tricky, and difficult.”

The symbiotic computer almost purred. “Let’s have the details.”

Roberts glanced up.

“Morrissey?”

“Sir?”

“When Hammell released the spy-circuits, some were drawn into the cruiser down there, and some went elsewhere. How is our general coverage on this part of the planet?”

“Most went elsewhere. We have a wealth of coverage where we don’t want it. We’ve got an inside view of deserted parts of the forest, we’re snooping in all the cabins we don’t want to be in, we’ve even got a close-up view of a pot-hole at the bottom of a waterfall, with rocks and gravel grinding around the inside; but we still don’t have as much overlapping coverage as I’d like of that cruiser.”

“How widespread is our coverage?”

“It takes in a lot of territory. The heaviest concentration of settlers is to the northeast of here, where the mines and separation apparatus are located. We have good coverage there.”

“Good enough,” said Roberts. “If I’m not mistaken, that is what they’ll aim to hit.”

Hammell said, “Excuse my curiosity, but what does the *position of the moon* have to do with this?”



THE MOON WAS HIGH in the sky as the spy screen showed the gravitic launcher slowly rising from the blunt tower just aft of the converted cruiser's main forward turret. The launcher's snout swung slowly around to aim toward the settlement, near the mines. The launcher lifted. There was a sudden indistinctness at its mouth.

On Roberts' battle screen, a long wavy blur showed the track of the gravitor beam projected by the launcher. A dot traveled rapidly up this wavy blur. The blur abruptly vanished. The dot continued onward and upward.

Roberts' hands reached out to the control board. A second very faint wavy blur appeared.

The dot gently shifted its course. The new beam eased steadily ahead. Instead of falling, the dot held its speed, moved over the target still gently rising, and then gathered speed within the beam, to climb rapidly upward. As the beam continued to slightly shift its angle, the resulting course for the dot was a long curving gentle rise, followed by a steep climb.

Morrissey, watching the spy screen, said, "They're in the control room. Mape is watching on their screen."

"Good," said Roberts, watching his screen. "What do they have to say?"

"I'll turn this up."

The voice of "Dr. Fellows" carried clearly: "Fine. That's taken care of. Now, the bird will be released, the carrier case will crash and break up, and after spreading the—er—seeding, the bird will become harmlessly dematerialized?"

Vank's voice chuckled.

"Exactly."

There was a brief silence, and then Mape's voice gave a low growl.

"Just what in hell is *this*?"

Fellows said, "What is it, Mape?"

"Something took off straight up, beyond the settlement."

"No trouble, surely?"

"Maybe. I don't know. But what is it?"

"The prospectors, hopefully? We'd be glad to see them leave."

"It isn't that big. This is a little thing, about the size of the bird, and its headed straight up, for the moon. —Of course, the prospectors could be *behind* this."

"I don't follow, Mape. What possible connection could there be between this thing and our—ah—affairs?"

"This disappearing Stellar Scout ship of theirs won't show up on the masometer with the moon behind it."

"And you think—"

"They may have grabbed the bird, and be reeling it in on a gravitor beam."

Fellows' voice took on ugly overtones.

"Then, they would be in a position to—to *blackmail* us. We'd have to give them a cut?"

Fellows said angrily, "I *despise* blackmailers. There's nothing lower. Dirty, rotten, sneaking, *underhanded*—"

"Incidentally, if we try to take off, they're in just the spot to knock us flat."

"After all the thought I've put into this, I *won't* be skimmed by a damned sneaking blackmailer! Is it too dangerous to use the guns? This *was* a Space Force cruiser!"



"The spot we're in," said Mape, "I'm all for using the guns. What have we got to lose?"

"Hold it!" said Vank. "You're just guessing. You don't know it's the bird!"

"No, I don't know it. But what else is it? I didn't *know* what was behind that massometer reading, but what could it have been but a ship? Things don't fly from a planet up toward its moon for *no* reason. If it isn't the bird, what is it?"

"But you said yourself it didn't start up right away. Why the lag?"

"To give them time to ease it on with gentle touches of the gravitor beam, to get it away from where we could follow it direct, so we wouldn't *know* what had happened."

"Yeah, that fits . . . What's the worst if we're wrong and take a crack at them?"

"If we're completely wrong, we'll make noise and hurt the people sleeping around here. If they're up there doing something else, one or the other of us will get finished."

Vank hesitated, but Fellows said coldly, "The danger justifies the risk. Go ahead, Mape."

Mape reached for the controls.

On the spy-screen, the covers slide back in the moonlight from the cruiser's weapons.

A volcanic eruption escorted by squardons of lightning bolts hurled itself toward the moon, and hurled itself again and again.

**R**OBERTS EYED his battle screen alertly.

"So far, so good. It's nice we're down here with a pressor beam instead of

up there with a tractor beam. —Now, did they do us the favor of finishing off the bird?"

The voice of the symbiotic computer replied, "The second salvo from the main fusion batteries destroyed the container and contents."

"Good. Did we lose any of it on the way up?"

"It was all held in the beam—assuming, of course, that the initial launching was efficient."

"Okay, Morrissey—"

"Right here," said Morrissey. "You want our replacement for the bird on your screen?"

"Yes."

"Here it is."

Roberts found himself looking around the interior of a darkened room on the screen, a room lit only by a little moonlight diffusing through a window high up.

A man's voice spoke in a whisper. "Did you hear that crash?"

There was a woman's murmur.

A little girl cried, "Mommy! Mommy! Something *bit* me!"

The woman screamed, "Jim! The window!"

At the small window, high up, a batlike form momentarily blotted out the moonlight.

Perhaps a tenth of a second later, flame spurted from the muzzle of an upraised gun, the crash echoed around the cabin, and there was a thin shriek and a rattling bumping noise as something fell down the cabin wall, followed by a thud as it hit ground.

The woman screamed.

"Be *careful*!"

The door banged shut behind him.



"Mommy!" sobbed the girl. "*It bit me!*"

"Don't move, Janey. *Stay where you are!*"

From outside came an oath, then a bellow.

"Look at this! Bill! Sam! Come out here!"

The scene shifted to the outside, where, amidst a bristle of guns, several men crouched in the moonlight, to straighten slowly and glance at one another.

"That thing isn't dead. Pierce its wing and tie a thong to the bone. Put it in a leather sack, and we'll take it with us. I'll get Peters and his crowd, we'll all be dressed in five minutes, and then we'll be right with you. See the women shutter those windows and keep the lamps dim. Leash the hounds on the poles, and we'll take two sticks of them."

**R**OBERTS STRAIGHTENED from the screen. "So far, so good. Now let's see how the kindly medical missionaries are making out in their private battleship."

Morrissey said, "I've got it on a split screen. It's very inspiring. Here it is."

Before Roberts, the scene changed, to show the cruiser's control room. Mape was shaking his head.

"No, no, there was nothing there. I don't explain it. *Unless—*"

Vank said, "A little more this dung, buddy, is about all we're going to take. You *sure* you didn't imagine it in the first place?"

Mape looked at him. His voice became soft, courteous.

"Would you like to *say* I imagined it?"

Vank snarled, "I'm not in the mood to play games! You want to fight a duel over it? Quick reflexes, with a pea for a brain! All I'd have to do is give you one squirt from a pressure-hype at breakfast, and you'd be dead with the cultured pus squirting out your ears by lunch. *You* are going to scare *me*, eh?"

Fellows said uneasily, "Vank, my boy—ah—we're all a little overstrained—let's not . . ."

Mape turned away, and worked small controls at the side of one of the cruiser's screens. The scene on the screen vanished, to be replaced by a black field marked with pale green outlines of the horizon as seen from the ship. A white dot disappeared over the horizon, and Mape said, "This is the recorded track of the bird. Watch it, and see what you think."

Vank frowned, but looked at the screen.

For a long moment, the screen showed nothing but the green outline of the horizon. Then, to the side, the white dot reappeared, climbed with increasing swiftness, to finally lift nearly straight up as the screen shifted its angle of view, to show the larger of the planet's moons, with a white dot climbing toward it.

Vank glanced swiftly at the controls Mape had just handled.

"Do that again."

Mape worked the controls.

Dr. Fellows came over and watched.

"Mape," he said, "excuse me, but I wonder if you'd replay that for me? And Vank, I wonder if you'd step aft, and just check—"



Mape said politely, his voice soft, "Go right ahead, Dr. Fellows. But as for Vank and me, we have a little something to talk over. Here, I'll set it to replay for you."

Dr. Fellows stood irresolutely at the screen as Mape and Vank went out. Perspiration rolled down Fellows' forehead. He mopped at it with his handkerchief, took one or two steps after them, then let out a deep shuddering breath, and came to a stop. He looked around uneasily.

"It's going sour," he said. "It was perfect, but it's going *sour*."

Roberts looked up from the screen.

"Fellows just might have enough intuition to get out of there. Do we have coverage of Mape and Vank?"

"No," said Morrissey. "Worse luck."

"Okay. If they decide to break for it, we're going to appreciate every hour of sleep we get tonight. It's going to take time for this to work itself out, and there isn't a great deal we can do until it takes shape. Let's set up watches."

**R**OBERTS WAS ON WATCH as things came to a head, a little before dawn.

Inside the converted cruiser, everything was quiet. The action was taking place outside, though there was, in fact, not very much to see except eyes.

Roberts, at the spy screen, had some difficulty spotting the unmoving faces, smeared with resin and leaves, just back from the edge of the clearing under cover of the trees that grew close to the edge of the clearing, their many leaves, angled to catch the light, providing cover. By careful use of the spy screen, Roberts had uncovered eight-

een of these figures, some well back from the cruiser, some in the very trees that provided it with cover. They all were watching, but as the sun gradually began to light the clearing, they did little else. It was, however, possible to see the pupils of their eyes move, back and forth, the eyes narrowed into hard slits, as they followed the batlike forms that came to, and departed from, the upthrust snout of the gravitic launcher. For a time, in the earliest light of the dawn, the cruiser had the look of some kind of interplanetary hornet's nest, bats scuttling in and out the tilted launcher, flitting around the clearing as if to get their bearings before setting out. In the actual light of dawn, this traffic thinned out, let up entirely, and the cruiser sat there, the beaded dew shining on it, under the hard gaze of numerous watching eyes.

Now there appeared, from the direction of a path through thick forest, a man carrying a little boy in his arms. He approached the ship with a look of touching trust and confidence, paused at the edge of the clearing, and glanced up at the closed hatch at the head of the ramp.

"Ho, Doc!" he called.

He started up the ramp.

"Doc! You folks awake in there? Doc! Open up!"

The cruiser's alarm system, apparently programmed to ignore small animals and signal the arrival of humans, gave a warning buzz.

Suddenly the hatch swung open at the top of the ramp.

"Dr. Fellows" appeared, scrubbed, benevolent, but slightly bloodshot.

"Come in! Come in! Ah, here's a



tragedy! Poor little fellow! What's this? Are there more? Has it broken out again, then? I'm certainly glad I'm still here!"

As the distressed parents—strangely all male, this time—thronged up the ramp, Dr. Fellows and his somewhat bandaged assistant readied the merciful hypodermic needles, a large bat flitted across the clearing, scuttled over the forward main turret of the cruiser, hopped up into the launcher, and vanished inside.

"Welcome, welcome, children," Dr. Fellows was saying. "We'll have this cleared up in a—ah—*What—*"

Half-a-dozen big hunting dogs, with teeth like cougars, shot up the ramp.

Roberts shifted views on the spy screen.

Vank was suddenly tied up, his arms behind his back. "Dr. Fellows," the look of surprise still on his face, was done up in leather thongs. Down in the bowels of the ship, Mape, by prearranged policy staying away from the other two in case there *should* be trouble, was backing away from a bat-like thing that had apparently come in through the open launcher slide. Mape's bafflement and distaste were evident on his face. But he had now, by staying calm, succeeded in maneuvering around it, to open the safety door that led to the corridor.

Outside, in the corridor, a big hound on a leash whimpered briefly, and two roughly dressed men stepped forward. One rammed the muzzle of his gun in Mape's side. The other judiciously kept his gun muzzle out of Mape's reach, while his grip eased a little tighter on the trigger. A third held the dog and

eyed the bat.

Mape said sharply, "What's this? While the Doctor heals your pox, you stick up his ship?"

The dog was staring into the room beyond. The bat scuttled across the floor. The man holding the leash said, "Ungrateful, aren't we?"

The bat took off, flitted around in large circles, then shot out through the door, to settle very lightly on Mape's shoulder. Once there, the hideous thing raised a wing, and began to clean itself.

Mape was saying, "It would serve you right if Doc left the lot of you to die after this!"

The dog eyed the bat, and its jaw quivered.

One of the men cautiously reached up. The bat hissed and bared its teeth, then snuggled closer on Mape's shoulder.

Mape heard the hiss, felt the movement, looked around in surprise, and saw what was cuddling close to him.

The colonists snorted.

"Don't act like you never saw it before! Look how it cuddles up to him. Okay, you, start up the corridor. — *Move!*"

Mape, the horror nestled beside him, its scratchy bristles against his neck as it made little happy chattering noises, swallowed hard and did as he was told.

As Roberts shifted scenes, Fellows, thoroughly trussed up, appeared, his expression hurt, his tones earnest.

"But, my dear young man, pox is *not* spread by the bite of an animal. And, even if it were, what have we to do with it? Ours is a humanitarian mission!"

"How is it," said a tall hard-eyed



colonist, "that you've had bats going in and out of that raised chute overhead since before it got light out there?"

"I'm sure I don't know, if it is indeed true, and not an optical illusion. Certainly we are not responsible if local life-forms choose to land on our ship."

"They were going *in and out* the chute."

"If there were any such things, we knew nothing of it. We were asleep. Rather than be disturbed by every mouse or chipmunk that might set foot on the ship, we had adjusted the intruder alarm to register only *human* or larger intruders. And these, we expected to treat as *guests*." His tone was injured; it rang with sincerity.

The colonist said, "You don't know anything about these bats?"

"Nothing. If there are any such things, we have had nothing to do with them."

Mape was prodded into the room, the bat nestling on his shoulder, cleaning the underside of its wing.

"Well," said the colonist spokesman, "tell us, how do you explain *that*?"

Fellows stared at Mape, who shrugged helplessly.

"Euh—" said Fellows, looking at the bat. "Mape, my boy—surely *you're* not implicated in this—this—"

The bat spotted Fellows, gave a little chirrup of delight, took off, and landed on Fellows' shoulder.

Fellows sat frozen.

The colonists delivered themselves of pithy expletives of disgust.

"Why," said Fellows, "It—ah—it's friendly. Surely, no harm could come from this—this friendly little cuddly

creature?"

The thing peered over its shoulder, hissed and rattled its teeth at the colonists, spotted Vank, staring and perspiring, and at once made a chortling noise and deserted Fellows for Vank, who let out a yell and rolled around as the bat hopped lightly over him, making happy chirruping sounds.

"M'm," said the colonist spokesman, "*it* loves *him*, but he doesn't want it anywhere near him. Why is he afraid of the friendly little cuddly creature? Jim—if you'd just bring that sack up here—"

A colonist holding a leather sack stepped forward, opened the sack, and a hissing ball of rat-colored fur, clicking its teeth together, rolled out on the end of a cord, flapped across the floor, stopped, hissed all around, then saw the perspiring Fellows. The thing gave a pathetic blat, scuttled over, and huddled close to Fellows, shivering.

Fellows began to shiver, himself.

"Oh," said a burly colonist. "He never *saw* the things before."

Fellows glanced at Mape, who looked back ironically. He turned to Vank. Vank was out cold, with the monstrosity perched on his head. For the first time, Fellows noticed the dull glint of steel around its mouth.

"What's this," he said. "Does it have artificial teeth of some kind?"

The spokesman for the colonists put on leather gloves, grabbed the injured bat, and held it up.

"Here, take a good look, Fellows. You see the little hollow needle in the left side of its jaw, and the recurved needle in the right side? Do you think we're such dolts we can't figure this



out? The left needle feeds from the left sack in that harness, and *it* will inject into whatever the bat tries to bite. The right needle feeds from the right sack, and it will flow back into the bat's mouth. The teeth are trimmed blunt and a little short, so they only give the bat the *sensation* of biting. The thing flies out of here, spots some poor fool worn out after a hard day's work, lying there asleep after telling his wife how lucky we are Doc Fellows is here to take care of the pox, and then this bat sent out by Dr. Fellows sets down lightly beside the poor fool, nips him in the neck with this hypodermic, which I suppose has some kind of anesthetic in it among other things, and as the bat bites, this little plunger on the hypo is shoved back and forth, and the little pump attached pumps air into the bag on the right side as well as the left, and warm blood or whatever is in that bag flows into the bat's mouth. When he's satisfied, the bat lets go, takes off, and comes back and goes to sleep for the night, or gets refilled and roosts in the trees, or however you've got him trained. But never mind that. The main thing is, *now the colonist has been injected with the pox.*"

Fellows was speechless.

The colonist spokesman waited grimly.

Fellows said, "But—you can search the ship—" He paused, and looked worried. "Look—what would be the advantage to us of a thing like that? Why, my dear man, we have *cured* you! It would be utterly senseless to infect you merely in order to cure you. Although if we did—simply for the sake of argument—what would be the harm?

If, through some accident, you had become infected through our agency, and we corrected the situation, could you blame us? Why, our good will is evident on the face of it! Surely this is obvious. You are cured, and it is we who have cured you! Now, untie us. Enough of this nonsense!"

The spokesman for the colonists glanced around.

"Any suggestions?"

A burly colonist with large hands said, "Heat up some irons. If that don't work I know a good stunt with water. None of you boys don't want to watch this, but stick around near, where you can hear what they say, and give me a hand, in case they go out of their heads. —Kind of a mess there toward the end sometimes . . . I used to be guard on one of them prison satellites. Wasn't my job, but I had to help out. I never thought it would come in useful, but you never can tell, can you? Just get me them irons and a blowtorch and a bucket of cold water."

Several of the colonists went out of the room.

Fellows swallowed and looked around. The only friendly thing in sight was the bat.

Mape spoke up. "*You* tell them, Fellows, or I'll tell them."

"How—"

The same burly colonist said, "Get them separate. We can check them against each other." He grunted. "Work hard all day, and then these sons put poisoned *bats* on us at night."

Fellows said desperately, "*We didn't.*"

"Split 'em up. You got to play 'em together sometimes, and sometimes



apart. We'll harmonize them."

There was a murmur amongst the colonists, and while it was impossible to say for sure what it might mean, Fellows said urgently, "*Mape!*"

"Right here," said Mape grimly.

"I'm going to tell them the complete facts, with nothing held back. You understand? I want you to do the same. If we had a chance, it would be different, but I don't want to play *this* hand to the end. —Answer anything and stick to the truth. That's the only way we can get our stories to match. Do you follow?"

"I follow."

"I'll tell Vank the same when he comes around. —All right, don't say any more till we're separated."

The burly colonist smiled faintly, but said nothing. Mape was hustled out, and Vank was lugged off to some other place.

Fellows, perspiring, said, "All right. Anything you want to know."

The spokesman for the colonists, his eyes hard, watched Fellows intently.

"What was the purpose?"

Fellows took a deep breath.

"The cure was drugged."

"What do you mean, drugged?"

"The—the disease was pseudopox. The same symptoms and effects as real pox—but we could cure this by a simple injection. Only, in the injection was an *impurity*."

"An *impurity*. It was there on purpose?"

"Yes. On purpose."

"What did the impurity do?"

"The name of it is ecstatin. We used a very small concentration. It's exceptional in that it stays in the blood for

about five to six weeks."

"Then what?"

"Then the last of it is excreted."

"What's the effect?"

"It makes a person more—more cheerful. Used in strong concentrations, it's lethal."

"All right. Come to the point. You used it in a light concentration. What harm did it do?"

"In itself, none, yet. But—ah—after it's all excreted, everyone who's had it will feel *depressed*."

"How depressed?"

"Almost to the point of suicide. It's a severe depression."

"What's the cure?"

"More ecstatin."

The colonist considered it.

"Let's be sure I get this. *First* you infected us with pseudopox?"

"Right."

"Then you cured us of the pseudopox, but injected *ecstatin* into us?"

"That's it."

"Why not hit us with ecstatin to start with?"

"We needed the pox first to explain the ecstatin later."

"How—?"

"After we cured you of what apparently was the pox, we would be heroes. Right?"

"Yes. Sure. You *were*."

"*Then* the results of the ecstatin would show up. We would be shocked, stunned. We would check our instruments, find a trace of it, and checking back, we would discover that a supplier of plasma had unwittingly supplied us with a batch contaminated with ecstatin. —Such things happen. You couldn't blame *us*. The supplier could hardly



be blamed if the plasma came from a planet where there's been no known trouble with ecstatin. The only thing is—*now* you'd have to have more ecstatin!"

The colonist smiled with his mouth only.

Fellows hurried on.

"Now, on some planets, ecstatin is legal. On others, possession is punished by death. As it happens, in *this* region of space, there is no planet where it is legally supplied."

"I still don't get it."

Fellows gave a little laugh.

"The thing is—it's not *illegal* for us to supply you. You don't have any law one way or the other about it. But now you'd have a *need*."

"And *you'd* supply it?"

"Yes. And, of course, you'd be willing to pay well, because it would cost us so much to drop everything and go way off to where it *is* legally supplied, to get a supply for you."

The colonist put his hand to his chin.

"Of course, we wouldn't blame *you* for this."

"How could you? After all, thanks to the pox ploy first, we'd saved your lives."

"*Pox ploy*. Yeah. But—wait a minute. How is it we don't notice the effects of this ecstatin?"

"First, it's in so low a concentration. Second, naturally you're relieved to get over the pox. That makes you happy, which masks the effect of the drug. That's one reason we timed it to get here in the spring. If it hit you in the winter, you might wonder."

"—So, you'd supply us with this stuff, at great expense, and we'd pay you.

Where's the gain?"

Fellows looked blank a moment, then shocked.

"There's no great expense involved. Not for *us*."

"You just said you'd have to make a long trip—"

Fellows snorted.

"That's only how it would be if we *hadn't* planned it. But, naturally, we're loaded up with ecstatin. We would go away for a time, after supplying you with enough to get by on out of our emergency chest. Then, *later*, we'd bring in the load, which you pay very steep for. But, you see, we wouldn't have been able to get all you needed on that one trip. *Something* would have gone wrong. We'd have to go back again. That would cost more."

The colonist squinted across the room. He gave a kind of low growl, and then shook his head.

"Each of these trips would take a long time."

"Right."

"But, you wouldn't actually *make* the trips?"

"No. That's just what we'd tell *you*."

"Then will you kindly tell me—What did you intend to do, stand around and *wait* between trips?"

Fellows looked incredulous.

"Don't you get it? We'd hit *other* planets!"

The colonist stared at him.

Fellows said, "Why stop here? It's a good game. We'd hit every colony planet at your level in the whole region."

"*What? With the same thing?*"

"Why not? We figured out a regular circuit. We'd milk maybe a dozen of



you, then be right in time back at the first one to tell what a rough trip we had making it in with the last half-load, and how they raised the price on us because they knew we were in a hurry. We'd do the same act on each planet, and it would be just as good on one as another. Meanwhile you'd be killing yourselves working to get enough export to pay for the ecstain. When you got self-governing, you'd vote the ecstain legal because you'd *have* to, and we could sell the circuit at a good price to a regular dealer and he'd maybe crack the whole region open."

The colonist, with an effort, unclenched his fists. He looked away for a moment.

"Fellows," no longer with any detectable trace of his previous lovable grandfatherly air, said, "I'm telling you the truth."

The colonists let his breath out. "That's the only reason I haven't touched you."

"We'd have made a fortune on this."

"All right. Now explain to us about the bats. Where do you keep them? How do you feed them? How does *that* work?"

Roberts turned, to call Hammell, Morrissey, and Bergen. But they were already right there behind him, watching the screen wide-eyed.

On the screen, Fellows perspired, and gave a little laugh. "The *bats*—"

"The bats," said the colonist. "Come on, let's hear about *that*, too."

Fellows looked around and licked his lips.

Morrissey murmured, "Quite an interesting problem to explain something you can't understand yourself."

"Especially," agreed Roberts, "when

there's somebody in the next room who doesn't understand it, and *he* has to explain it, too."

"—So that the stories have to check afterward. Yes, that adds an extra dimension."

On the screen, Fellows was earnestly explaining, and the spokesman for the colonists irritably brushed the explanation aside.

"Listen, *friend*," he snarled, "we're just a collection of plodders. Never in a hundred years would we have thought of a scheme like this one. If you hadn't had a streak of bad luck, we'd never have seen any of your bats at work, and we'd *never* have caught on. It would have worked out just as you say. But—"

"But," screamed Fellows, "*we didn't use bats!*"

The colonists murmured. Their spokesman pointed to the form curled up against Fellows.

Fellows opened his mouth, stared at the bat, and shut his mouth.

"Now," said the colonists' spokesman, "we are not going to be safe until we get rid of those things. We've already got pox victims and ecstain addicts among us for no fault of their own. But there's no reason why the bats couldn't hit us with instant poison as well. We want the end of these bats. Now, don't tell us you didn't use them. *Tell us the truth!*"

Hammell grinned. "Did you notice how this bird was contemptuous of the colonists a little bit ago? He doesn't look contemptuous now."

Roberts nodded. "For someone willing to put twelve colony planets in a trap, he doesn't enjoy being in one himself. —Although, he's lucky to be



alive."

Morrissey watched the screen.

"So far."

Hammell bared his teeth, eyes focused on the screen.

Bergen looked serious, and Roberts winced.

The bat flew off, to momentarily provide a distraction.

Some minutes later, the symbiotic computer spoke cheerfully.

"The last of the quasibiological artifacts have been recovered, and our job here is now finished. The damage to this planet has been minimized. 'Dr. Fellows,' Mape, and Vank are now serving the beginning of their sentence as visited on them informally by the colonists, and if they ever get away from this planet, they will think twice before hitting another colony planet. This is a creditable achievement. There are, however, more planets in the vicinity in this same vulnerable stage of development."

Roberts guided the Interstellar Patrol ship rapidly up from the planet.

Bergen said, "I have a question."

"Proceed," said Roberts cheerfully.

"The *standard* way to handle this would have been to imprison Fellows and the rest, and provide special medical care for the colonists. Our way gave me a lot more satisfaction, but—how come we didn't do it the standard way?"

Roberts smiled.

"I imagine Fellows could get a lawyer who knows his way around in court, don't you?"

"Probably so."

"And suppose this lawyer is smarter than the prosecutor?"

"Well, if the evidence is overwhelming—"

Roberts shook his head.

"Fellows had *already* defeated, in advance, all the ordinary methods of applying justice. The Space Police, Space Force, P.D.A.—he'd gotten around the lot, and for all you and I know, he could have gotten around the courts, too. At that, if it hadn't been for the bats, he would have ended up a *hero* to the colonists themselves. The bats were the unfair blow that did it for him.

"Now," Roberts went on, "there's the 'rule of law' and there's the 'rule of men,' but both tend to work down to standard procedures, standard views, standard prejudices, and all this can generally be manipulated by a clever crook. But exactly how does the clever crook manipulate *what he can't understand himself?*"

Bergen rubbed his chin.

"I think I get it. They can't reduce us to rule, so they can't figure a way around us."

Roberts nodded.

"The criminals we have to contend with couldn't care less for law. *Men* they respect a little more.

"But," he said, "what really gives them pause is the Unknown.

"That's where we make *our* contribution to Justice."

—CHRISTOPHER ANVIL

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### ON SALE NOW IN JUNE FANTASTIC

The conclusion of GORDON EKLUND's NEW novel—BEYOND THE RESURRECTION, plus stories by ALEXEI PANSHIN, BARRY MALZBERG, ROBERT E. TOONEY JR., and DENNIS O'NEIL.

THE UNKNOWN



# ***FREEDOM ACROSS THE RIVER***

**ROBERT TAYLOR**

*Robert Taylor published his first story, "Idiot's Mate," in the September, 1968 issue of this magazine. Now he returns with a story about freedom—its value and its cost . . .*

***Illustrated by DAVE COCKRUM***

**O**UTSIDE TEMPERATURE was 80° K, and it would drop even more drastically as they continued to race away from sunside.

Heisk steered the tiny flier through the buffeting winds and the gripping darkness that was relieved only now and then by a thousand points of ice catching the flare of the distant sun that was slowly slipping toward the horizon of Titan. Behind was sunside, warmth, and doom; ahead was nightside, cold, and—perhaps—hope.

The hissing of the oxygen tubes was harsh in his ears, and his half-empty water pouch talked liquidly as the water was sloshed about by the rockings of the flier. Every little thing was an irritation now, because the anger inside his body demanded to get out, and he had nothing to direct it against except himself and any object that couldn't fight back. The second choice was more pleasing to his ego.

Failure. Admit it.

Heisk steered the tiny flier through

the convection currents of Titan's summer, riding the high wind with doom sitting on his shoulder like a black raven. It stared with cold burning eyes and darkened all his thoughts.

Doom. He had lived with doom all the days of his life, as had everyone on Titan. Doom was a constant companion when you depended upon bottled air, bottled water, and a thin sheet of metal to keep the warmth inside the domes and the raging deep-freeze of Titan on the outside. So, he had lived with doom from the first instant that his new-born lungs had sucked in breath, and even before.

Doom. All live with doom, he thought. Even those on the homeworld. But not like we few on Titan out here near the edge of the system.

Below, the ammonia snow glinted with reflected sunlight caught just right.

His parents had lived with doom, and had finally succumbed to it. They had spent almost their entire lives working on the ship that was destined



to carry men from Titan on out to the edge of the system, and even beyond into the Great Deep. But then the war with the Jovian Moons had interrupted the shipments of supplies, and finally Mater Terra herself had fallen under the tyranny of the Regnum. Now the ship lay buried in a huge cavern, but three-quarters completed, waiting, waiting out eternity till a time when work would resume once more.

Beside him, his passenger moaned.

Heisk felt a chill run over him. He had risked everything for this, and he could only wish that he knew whether or not he had done the right thing. This was known to only one other person—the agent from the Jovian Moons; even the friends he had sacrificed had thought his real plan was to capture the main power plant and force Brorston's surrender.

Now, he raced into the darkness of Titan with one of the greatest men in the system, raced with doom like a raven on his shoulder towards the Jovian ship that was his only hope.

The tiny craft bucked violently as the wind stream he was in was slashed by a cross-current. His hands steady on the controls, he eased it out of danger. He prayed that this summer wouldn't build up another blow like that of last summer. He hadn't been around then, but he had heard all too much about it.

His passenger moaned again, his body beginning to twitch around as he started coming out of the somnolent-induced sleep.

Setting the controls on automatic, and praying to whatever god controlled the weather for easy passage, Heisk





turned to Lars Tanver. The tech's eyes fluttered open, then closed against the weak glare of the panel lights.

Tanver was about forty-five, but his face had an agelessness chiseled into it by years of tribulation. His hair was a bristled shock that was shot through with grey and white. Energy from some vast inner turmoil constantly burnt through him.

Heisk felt about under the control console till he found the small bottle of water he had stashed there for this emergency. Opening the front of Tanver's helmet, he poured a small trickle of water between the tech's lips. Tanver swallowed noisily and opened his eyes once more.

A thrill ran through Heisk. He was helping the most important man on Titan, in the whole system; so important that the Jovian Moons had granted him free passage to freedom, just for rescuing this man from the Oligarch.

Heisk had been brought up on the story. Tanver had been a young technician back on Terra when the tyranny of the Regnum descended upon her. Somehow, he had escaped the detention cells that had claimed the lives of so many of Terra's finest brains. He had wandered, helped by an underground that diminished every day. And finally he had been able to escape on the last ship that had lifted off from the homeworld and make his way out here to Titan, where he had lived in peace.

For fourteen years.

It was just a year ago that the Oligarch had taken over. Tanver had fought hard for the return of freedom, a fight that had culminated in an attempt to assassinate Brorston, and a

wild flight to a ship that was waiting to take him to the Jovian Moons, perhaps the same ship that was waiting for him now.

But he had been caught by Brorston's police, and for the last year he had been in exile in his small dome a few kilometers outside Titan City.

Heisk closed his eyes. He had sacrificed three friends to rescue Tanver, to get him to the Jovians, hoping that he would be able to work for freedom from there.

The black raven on his shoulder clawed deep.

Heisk forced his mind away from that and began checking the tech's suit, sealing the helmet tightly. They should have to face Titan's atmosphere for only a few minutes, but he wanted to be ready for any emergency.

Tanver's eyes were open and staring at him now, though still blurred by sleep. He reached out a hand and gripped Heisk hard about the right elbow. "Who? What?" The words were blurred slightly by a numbed tongue.

Heisk turned to him, pride swelling up within him. Here he was at last with an idol he had worshipped for years.

"Don't you remember, Doctor? I rescued you. I blew in the side of your dome and plucked you away from Brorston's goons. I'm sorry about the somnin, but I couldn't be sure how you would react, and I didn't have time to argue."

Tanver shook his head slowly, wearily, trying desperately to clear away the sluggishness that the drug had left him with.

"Yes, yes, I think I do remember. You must be one of the rebels."

"Yes." Heisk smiled shyly and



waited for the least bit of praise.

"And where are we going?"

"To a Jovian Ship. It's waiting a few kilometers ahead."

"And so, you betray your country as well as me." The words were soft but they burnt down through Heisk's skin and ate at his heart like flaming coals.

"Doctor—"

"Don't you realize you'll never make it? Brorston has the air full of fliers. He'll pluck us back long before you reach it."

Heisk could only stare at him in stunned silence.

What in the name of Saturn's rings was happening?

"Oh gods, you've been adjusted." His whisper was harsh in the enclosed cabin of the small flier, and each word seemed to drip with blood.

Tanver glared defiance at him. "Call it what you like. I only know that I am now able to see everything more clearly. My emotional bias has been removed."

*Oh gods, gods.*

Heisk turned away from him, sick with horror. He knew what had happened to Tanver. He had been placed under the psychic probe, and there he had been adjusted to fit in with Brorston's scheme of things. His emotional bias had been changed—his hatred for Brorston and his tyranny changed to love—everything changed. The old Tanver was dead. Science had created a second one who had risen from the ashes of the first like a warped phoenix.

And this Tanver was one of the enemies of freedom, just as the other had been its greatest friend. Heisk had killed two of Brorston's guards to rescue him, and deserted his friends. They

were dead now, or, worse, adjusted to fight for Brorston. And had it all been for *this*?

Heisk looked wearily at Tanver. "Doctor, you will make no attempt to escape. It will only get you injured."

The tech seemed to slump a little. "There is no need. Brorston will catch you."

Heisk turned back to the controls, staring out into a night that was eternal, even though the sun was still above the horizon. Cold, cold out there, cold as death. A man wouldn't have a chance to take even one breath before he started to freeze. He would be dead long before he exhaled again.

His eyes focused on the image on the glass, the image of himself caught in the orange glare from the instruments. He looked like one of the damned basking in hell-fire. He had a long, narrow face that looked too pale beneath his black, black hair, and a great hook of a nose. The high bone ridges under his eyes made his cheeks suck in, making him look sick, and his eyes were hidden in pools of darkness.

A worried face, bitten by cold and the always-present bird of doom.

A face swam beside him suddenly, and then another, and yet another. They smiled on him, Jon, Paal, Teri.

He felt warm again. The sense of despair that had been hanging over him for so long almost left him, but suddenly they began frowning, and a look of hate came into their eyes; and the dark gloom all about him became even more oppressive.

Damn Brorston! But why depend on common humanity where there *is* none? Do you condemn a black widow spider because it is itself?



Condemn instead his own idealistic self, that wanted freedom in a world which seemed to want only tyranny. He had fallen in love with a song, and because of it his only friends were dead.

He remembered. His father had taught it to him, long ago. It had been sung by a slave people in one of the old American republics, centuries ago.

*There's freedom across the river,  
If the river would go down;  
But the river he runs highly;  
We swim him and we drown.*

It had all come boiling to the surface when the Oligarch was created; the idealism, the thought of his parents' lives wasted. When the banners were hung from every building, declaring "Your Government Loves You!" in bright letters, his anger rose to the surface. He recognized them for what they were: a rational attempt to justify tyranny.

Love was stifling when it was used by a tyrant. For all its love and seeming concern for the welfare of the people, Brorston's Oligarch was actually no better than the dark Regnum that was flourishing on Mater Terra.

He had seen it coming, as had others; but they had merely protested, weakly. Except for Tanver, not one of them had acted. And then the time had come when it was too late to act. The Director and the Senate were openly unified into the Oligarch and freedom had died on another world.

*Four of us, he thought. Just four of us who weren't scared too much to band together in an underground and fight for freedom.*

Jon, Pall, Teri, and Edward Heisk.

They had been planning for almost a year, sure that if they could capture the central power plant and the oxygen stores they could force Brorston to acquiesce. Then the day had finally arrived, and Heisk had deserted them.

The offer from the Jovians had been too good. He had never found out how that agent had managed to slip into the dome, but he had contacted Heisk and offered a bargain: Free passage to the Jovians for him, and possible help in freeing Titan at some later day, if he would rescue Tanver from his exile.

*Failure. Admit it. You knew that you would fail all along, and so you took the easy way out. To live high and easy on the Jovians, while your people rot in slavery.*

The darkness in his heart was darker and colder far than the darkness outside. It was so cold that it burnt him.

Another cross-current caught the flier, and Heisk fought long, hard minutes keeping it on course. When he was through, he was strangely exhausted, and the darkness seemed to have worked out of him.

He turned back to Tanver. "Don't you feel? Don't you feel any of the old rebel in you? Don't you remember?"

Tanver sneered at him. "Oh, I remember all right, and every memory is a hot brand in my soul. Don't you see? There can be no freedom out here, not the way you think of freedom. On a world like this, the right to existence is something that the whole community must buy together. An individual can't be allowed to do as he wants, because he can upset the whole community. One mistake and everybody may die."



Heisk gazed back through the darkness around the small cabin. Nothing much. Overhead, a bubble let in a glare of stars peeping easily through the thin atmosphere, and in one corner lay a pouch—the bombs he had spent long hours making.

But where was hope hiding?

Perhaps the Jovians would be able to reverse the damage done by Brorston. However slim that perhaps might be, it was Tanver's only hope.

He stared into those blazing dark eyes again. Something stirred there. Somewhere far below the surface he could see the power and the rage of the old Tanver, hiding, trying to work its way up to the surface. A fire as hot as all of hell burnt within Tanver's soul, and a demon peeped out of his eyes.

"Don't give up," he told it. "We'll get through this yet. We won't surrender as long as there's the faintest chance."

Tanver didn't answer. Instead, he turned around and gazed a long minute out the ceiling bubble. Then he laughed. "Ha, there's all the chance you have."

He pointed.

Blazing there to be stared at was the glare of a flier's rocket. Brorston's police were on Heisk's trail.

His mind did nothing. It was too wrapped up in all the blackness of his darkest nightmares. His fingers did the work for him, leaping out at the controls. They pushed the flier onward, even faster, faster, raising into the air as the wind caught the wing surfaces and pushed upwards.

The air currents were a little tricky up this high. Blasts of cold air flowed

back towards sunside, and he had to fight to avoid being swept around by them. The flier continuously complained, and he prayed that the wings would hold.

After a few minutes, he dove down in a long powered glide, hoping that the added speed would increase the distance between him and the pursuing ship, hoping that it had lost him, or, better yet, never seen him.

The ice was glittering close to the flier now, a thousand tiny needles to each square foot. The sun was almost on the horizon now, so each glittering face was backed up by a long, engulfing shadow.

Too close. Better pull up again.

His fingers started to touch the controls, when Tanver laughed, a laugh of triumph.

Heisk stopped and looked back over his shoulder. There was nothing in the night sky but stars.

But he knew what it was that Tanver had laughed at. He could almost feel the missile eating its way through the cold, cold air of Titan.

There was a sound as if a giant had dropped an empty box and the flier lurched.

**O**UTSIDE TEMPERATURE 70° K, only it was also the inside temperature. The glass of the windshield was smashed, and there was a ragged hole along one side of the cabin.

Heisk saw it all with his head smashed down against the control console, the temperature gauge gleaming with a shrill neon glow just before his eyes. There was a deep scratch across the lens of his helmet, but it was un-



broken.

He began to shake, uncontrollably.

They would have killed him to keep him from escaping with Tanver; killed them both.

Heisk bit his under-lip, bit it until he tasted hot pain in his mouth and the saltiness of blood on his tongue. The black raven of doom had become a vulture and was striking now even before the meat was dead.

He was weeping, he realized, weeping tears that turned cold on his cheeks. He was suddenly a little child weeping for the unfairness of it all. His parents had been denied their rightful heritage, and he had been going to vindicate them by helping to free Titan; but they had stopped him, tried to kill him, and now he would die out here in the snows of Titan.

With the Jovian ship just kilometers away.

*Stop it!* shouted his mind. *Stop it! Play the man.*

*Stop it!*

"Stop it! Stop it!" The words echoed inside his helmet.

He made his legs pull him out of the seat and stand him as straight as they could on the deck. He wobbled, and his head ached, but he could stand and see straight, despite the ragged line across his field of vision.

Tanver lay slumped half out of his chair. Heisk turned him over, and as far as he could see the tech wasn't badly injured. At least he was breathing, though for how long depended upon the kindness of the fates.

He suddenly saw the sign over the lock for the first time. "Your Government *Loves You*" it declared. Heisk

tore at it savagely with the claws of his suit, then slumped back into himself.

Shaken as he was, his mind began to plan. He reached over and grabbed the pouch with the bombs in it, then began shaking Tanver gently. "Doctor. Doctor Tanver."

Tanver's head moved slightly.

"Lars Tanver."

The man's eyes started to open, then shut firmly again.

Heisk sighed and yanked Tanver up, half-carrying, half-dragging him to the lock. There was no difference in atmospheres, so he just shoved both doors open, ignoring the disapproving buzz. Then he slipped Tanver down onto the snow and jumped down after him.

He leaned against the flier, his heart pounding. Tanver was light, especially under Titan's low gravity, but still he wasn't used to that much exertion, added to the strain of the flight.

Heisk gazed at the sun that burnt like a tiny puff of flame on the horizon. What little warmth it gave was almost lost at this angle. Practically the only reason they weren't in the full cold of nightside was the warm air blowing in from the hot summer of sunside. Cold, cold. Even with the heaters of his suit working away, he could feel the chilling, unthinkable cold of the warm wind that was blowing from the sun. He wished that he could build a fire and curl up before it and sleep, sleep for a thousand years and wake up to find everything was settled and everybody was happy.

But he still had here and now to live in. Death was waiting, and doom hung



above them ready to drop. He would have to work if the two of them were to survive.

He knelt down beside Tanver, unconsciously singing.

"There's freedom across the river,  
If the river—"

Tanver's eyes were open now, staring out. The tech was shaking his head, trying to clear it once again.

Heisk helped him up and led him to a spot about ten meters away, then turned to survey the flier.

It had come skidding in, snapping off both wings—or perhaps the missile had done most of that. Whatever, the skid mark pointed straight at the sun, stretching far, far out—perhaps half a kilometer.

The fuel tank wasn't ruptured. No danger of an explosion, but he would change that.

The police craft that had fired the missile would be coming soon, and he wanted it to see something that was natural after a flier went down at full speed: twisted metal, burning fuel, and a hole melted in the ammonia snow by the heat.

He looked around.

"Doctor, I think we'd better move behind that mound there."

Tanver was still groggy, so he moved without asking questions. Once in a position he judged to be safe, Heisk sighted, then tossed one of the bombs in a long arc.

There was a sound like a whole world being crumpled, a flash of fire leaping into the sky, and a blowing cloud of steam. He was engulfed by it as it blew about him, falling freezing drops down and congealing in icy pat-

terns on his suit.

Heisk peeped timidly over the mound.

There were twisted pieces of the flier lying in a lake that was covered with flaming fuel and hot ammonia gas.

He glanced back towards the sun. There, above the great flame, was another flame that marked the rocket of a flier. They were coming, coming.

He would show them.

Heisk had never prayed before, but suddenly he found that he needed something. But on his knees, no words would come. What were the proper words, and what should he pray for? Should he pray for his own victory and escape? for the deaths of those coming after him?

Suddenly it was as if a great eye were peering deep into his soul, seeing every sordid detail of it. What then? Forgiveness for the deed he was about to do? No, he wanted no forgiveness. What he was about to do he fully thought was right. Let him be damned, he would still do it.

And suddenly he knew. With the chill winds of Titan blowing about him, alone even with Tanver in a stupor beside him; tired, cold, and afraid, he prayed. *My friends. Lord, forgive me for deserting my friends.*

The wind whispered emptily at him.

Heisk sighed and checked the bombs still remaining in the pouch. Three left. Not very beautiful, but then he hadn't intended them to be beautiful. Working long hours over them, he had not even thought of adding that hypocrisy to his other sins.

Somehow, looking at them, he felt happier, even though, intended for



death, they were going to bring death again. The idea of something fulfilling its proper function delighted him.

The flier was coming nearer. No longer a black dot near the horizon, it was visible in detail only about a kilometer away.

He knelt by Tanver. The tech had his eyes open and was gazing out into the wastes.

"Doctor, can you hear me? Just stay here. There's going to be some fighting, and you'll just get in everybody's way." He licked his lips. "If I'm killed, you're near enough so that they'll find you."

The flier was dropping down now, nearer and nearer, its glides out like the legs of some gigantic bird, set for a landing.

It touched down in a spray of snow, gliding in smoothly, stopping a hundred meters from the twisted metal that still glowed in the pool of fire.

Heisk felt his anger working within him again, screaming out at these dark oppressors of freedom, Brorston's goons.

The flier sat impassively, waiting.

Come out! Heisk screamed silently to the cold blowing winds of Titan. Come and be killed.

The lock of the flier opened, slowly and painfully, then one, two, three figures in black and red slipped out, took one look around and began walking towards the wreck.

*... Dilly dilly,*

*Come let us die.*

Heisk thrust the drunken poet's words into the back of his brain. He crouched, waiting. The way they were walking, they would pass within twenty meters of him.

The ancient predator in his blood pricked up the hairs of his neck. He almost growled.

His arm did it for him. Perhaps his intellect wanted no part of the blood, or perhaps death was pounding in his ears so loud that he couldn't think; but his arm wanted blood, and his arm could think. It groped in the pouch and, one two three, let the bombs fly.

A pillar of hot ammonia gas rose up into the air. Something black shot up through it and came clattering down not far away.

As Heisk began to run toward the flier waiting oh so far away, an earthquake began. He was pitched and tossed about, though, strangely, he was the only thing that was.

Damn damn damn damn, you've done it now. Do you remember how many a police flier carries? Stupid stupid stupid stupid. You'll probably pay for your mistake.

Doom was fluttering after him like a giant bat, a black crow shape that blotted out the stars. He felt it latch onto him with cold, hooking claws.

Doom.

Another black figure slipped out of the lock of the flier, some ten meters ahead. It raised a gun and pointed it towards Heisk.

All his anger and rage boiled up into him, and he put all his strength into making one last leap before the projectile tore out of the muzzle and slammed him into the dark forever.

Collision, ring of steel against steel, and then a further crash as they both bounced off the flier. And then Heisk was fighting for his life.

Somehow he came out on top of the



black-suited policeman, holding the struggling man down with all his force, each with their hands on the gun. But it couldn't last long. Heisk felt himself weakening, while the policeman seemed to be growing only stronger.

Bearing all his strength on the gun, Heisk let go with one hand and reached back for one of the tools clipped to the belt of his suit.

He was being yanked off by the struggling figure, steadily losing control of the gun. And that would be the end.

His hand found something. He ripped it free and swung, connecting with the lens of the helmet.

She was beautiful. For one brief second before the cold, cold winds of Titan closed down on her forever, she was the most beautiful thing that Heisk had ever seen in his short, unhappy life. Golden eyes stared up at him, crisp black hair fluttered about the sides of her face, and her red mouth—with lips so luscious that he would gladly kiss them—was open in surprise.

She didn't have time to scream before she blossomed a cloud of steam, and frost began to form over her frozen face.

Heisk did the screaming for her.

An eternity later, his mind cleared enough for him to realize once more where he was. He turned to find Tanver standing over the girl, his face unrecognizable from the white glare on the helmet lens.

He shook his anguish away enough to remember his mission. "Doctor, get aboard please."

Tanver turned towards Heisk, and his face was grim through the glare. "How do you feel now?"

"Doctor, please get aboard."

"And if I refuse?"

Heisk swallowed. He closed his eyes, his lids burning with fever. He felt weak. He wanted to collapse and lie forever in the snow. "I will use force if necessary."

"Like the girl?"

Something snapped in Heisk. Calmly, but with a rage inside, he raised the girl's gun and smashed it into Tanver's middle. Then he lifted the fallen tech and carried him into the flier.

Within him, the darkness had eclipsed his soul.

**O**UTSIDE TEMPERATURE 55° K. The sun was below the horizon now, so they were on nightside and the temperature drop would be levelling off to a steady constant.

Heisk sat numbly before the control console, drained of all emotion. He was cold, and he wanted to cry, but he no longer knew how.

Count them, count them, whispered his most private thoughts. How many have you sacrificed in freedom's name? And how much freedom has it won? Count them!

Tanver was slumped in the chair beside him, moaning, struggling into consciousness.

For you, whispered his thoughts. To free you from your dark bondage. For all of us. An act to keep the name of freedom alive. And what will come of it?

He reached out towards the gun he had taken from the girl, prepared to toss it into the back of the flier. Then he froze, horror eating at him.



He recognized it suddenly. This was no projectile throwing gun. This was one of the new stun-beamers that had been developed about a year ago.

His life hadn't been in danger. She hadn't been about to kill him. She was not yet twenty, afraid, being attacked by a man she couldn't kill, but who could most certainly kill her.

And she lay dead.

Damn Brorston!

*Oh God, forgive me for killing her, at least that.*

Heisk wept silently to himself until the lines of the Jovian ship appeared on the horizon.

HEISK STOOD in a cold sweep of wind outside the flier with Tanver before him. The tech was still groggy from the many blows he'd received today.

The Jovian agent strode towards them, small in his blue suit.

"Hello, Edward. I'm glad to see you made it. Is Doctor Tanver all right?"

"All right. He's just shaken up."

"You've done well. Shall we go? We started cycling for lift-off as soon as you appeared on the horizon."

They started walking, Tanver in front, Heisk behind him, and the Jovian by his side lagging slightly behind.

Heisk glanced back at the flier. "I betrayed three of my friends and killed a girl to get here. Does it bother you to walk with a traitor and a murderer?"

"Not as long as it was done in the name of freedom."

"In the name of freedom. But there is no freedom."

"There is on the Jovian Moons."

"Is there?"

Ahead of them, the ship pointed like

a silver finger towards the stars, and, so it seemed to Heisk, towards the future. In his mind he identified it with the ship that still lay unfinished in its ice cavern, waiting for the time when it would move outward, towards the freedom of deep space.

Freedom. He had swum the river to freedom. It had stormed and raged at him, he had been swept and all but lost, but he had at last been flung up here on shore, safe.

It almost seemed worth it.

A tiny nagging thought came to spoil his happiness.

"Tell me three things," he said softly. "How did you land here without being detected, how did you contact me, and how have you escaped—"

He saw a blueness flare behind him, and a terrible cold washed over him, as cold as the cold that must exist in deep space where the stars are but tiny flares that are washed about in the sea of the universe. Heisk turned to see the Jovian holding a gun like the girl's, its snout still burning with a blue flame.

He spun around, and Tanver was grinning at him, wickedly.

He fell into himself.

DARKNESS, COLD. Heisk lay naked on a table with some vague shape that might be machinery above his head. He tried to move, but wasn't surprised to find he couldn't.

He heard something move in the darkness, and a soft illumination sprang up about him, showing distant grey walls and an ugly silver thing above his head. A face thrust itself before his. Tanver.

"So?" he heard his voice say.



"Yes, so. You were very foolish, Edward, to try to escape, very foolish to try to change the government by force. After all, it is the best."

Heisk gnawed on his lips. "Don't preach to me. What I did was right, whether or not anyone else thinks so. Take me back, put me on the showcase, then execute me."

He lay with his eyes closed. He was guilty, he knew that deep down in his heart. The order of the universe demanded his execution, and he wasn't going to go against it. It would wipe out all his wrongs, his friends deserted, that girl killed.

But, he had been *so* close, within millimeters, before the flood had washed him away.

*... We swim him and we drown.*

He was being dragged down to the deepest part of the river.

Tanver leaned closer to him. "What did they ever do to you? What atrocity did they ever commit? Think Edward. Isn't this way better than the old? They gave you love, and you slapped them."

"I'm guilty! But don't preach to me, execute me."

"I'm glad to hear you admit it, but you're not going to be executed."

Heisk felt a cold stir of sick horror in his belly. He had known it, but he had tried to deny it to himself.

Tanver placed his hand on the dark machine that loomed over Heisk's head, gleaming silver. "This is a psychic probe. Years ago, we would have been forced to execute you, but now we can destroy those parts of your psyche that are antisocial and substitute proper elements. If you're strong enough to fight, we want you on our

side. Instead of fighting us, you'll be working with us.

"Actually, this whole comedy was a test. I was the bait, and you, or someone like you, was to be the victim. Your Jovian agent contacted three others, but you were the only one brave enough to take the bait. You could have died, and we would have thought nothing of it. But you came through, and so we want you on our side. We need lions to keep the sheep in order, and someday we'll winnow out all the lions like you and use their forces for construction, and the world will be a better place."

Heisk couldn't take his eyes off the monster above him. He knew what it was: death of the basic atom of personality that made him what he was, that made him different from all other men. For all practical purposes, after his adjustment he himself would be dead.

His soul would be dead.

There was something to be feared, after all, more than death was to be feared.

Heisk began to scream.

"No, Edward."

Something cold touched him on the arm. Suddenly he was squashed down into his body; small, small, so very small that he couldn't find himself. And he could only look up and up and up.

"They tell me that I was probed, and am I any the worse for it? After it's over, you'll never even know."

Tanver reached up to do something to the machine. He chuckled and looked down on Heisk lying there naked, his eyes frozen open, looking

(Continued on page 130)



*There was a time in the history of sf magazines when a particular kind of story called the "space opera" was in common coinage. It was known as a "transplanted western," and one magazine of the 1950's took out advertisements to proclaim the fact that such stories would never be published within its pages. But the most common western story is really a frontier story, and Man needs his frontiers—if not here on Earth, then in space, wherever they can be found. And if we do find new frontiers on the outer edge of civilization, stories like the one which follows will become an inevitable part of them, because—*

## ***THERE'S A SPECIAL KIND NEEDED OUT THERE***

### **WILLIAM ROTSLER**

***Illustrated by MIKE KALUTA***

**A** WHORE IS A WHORE is a whore in most parts of the system, especially the filled-up places, like Earth and Luna. There are a lot of them, legal and illegal, and you pays your money and you takes your chances.

But not a lot of women make it out to Mars and there they get treated differently. Oh, there are plenty of idiots who still sneer and a lot who think such women are beneath them, but most of the miners and other working apes prize a good woman pretty highly.

You get out beyond Mars, which is getting pretty damned civilized these days, and you find places where women are really valuable and treated accordingly. Out on Ganymede and Callisto and Europa there just aren't too many women and when you get all the way out to Saturn finding a

female on Iapetus or Titan is just so damned rare you just stand there gaping and fogging up the dome.

But not even a great big outfit like Jupiter Mining & Metals sends a girl all the way out to the twelve moons just to whore. She must have some skill or profession that we can really use to make it worth while to ship her. A lot of the dollies are nurses or computer punchers. Some are cooks, some are ore checkers, and there's one hell of a good looker all the way out on Titan who has a degree in geology!

The women are treated extra special nice but only a few really take a big advantage of it. They come out on five-year contracts just like the rest of us rock jockeys and even without marrying some quick-rich miner they can go home pretty well off. More often than not they sign over for another



year, sometimes two, and a lot of good women have just stayed on.

I think something happens to them out here. They come out of some crowded suburb or megacity and out here they find space, elbow space as well as the Big Dark. The men they meet don't really have a hellava lot of culture, and they talk pretty rough, but most of them are pretty honest.

The women that really take some rockclutcher for everything are rare because The Company puts them all through a tight screening. Of course there is no telling where human greed will pop up next, but all in all they're a humanly warm dither of whores and many a cleanboot has lost his teeth with unexpected suddenness when he looked down at one.

I'd been snagging stray rocks out of orbit around Saturn and Jupiter for a lot of years when I dropped into Big Jupe's with a couple of megastars on my company credit card and the itch to spend. I came in ready for a big drunk, a big high and a lot of woman-flesh, and willing to pay top credit. What I spent was my heart.

Jennifer was her name and she was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. Yeah, I know all those old jokes about getting rock happy and jumping on the first female Ugly you see, thinking she's the Sex Queen of Venus. This wasn't like that. Jenny *was* beautiful, and not just outside, either.

I could see right off that she was the favorite at Big Jupe's and Big Jupe's was the best bar and whorehouse in 418,000,000 miles. Only the Redplanet Inn at Ares Center or Chris's Place at Grandcanal City could touch it and



HW  
K.



neither of them had Jennifer Ann Johnson, so they lost.

"What's her name?" I asked Black-jack, leaning against the bar.

He didn't even have to ask which one before he told me. I heaved loose of the bar and sailed towards her. Even in Callisto's light gravity you got weight, of course, but right then I was flying null.

She was standing there talking to Old Buchanan and Jarvis Marham and another dude I didn't know. I said, "Excuse me, boys," but I was looking at her. She looked up at me, with her hand still on Buchanan's shoulder, and smiled, then her smile kind of faltered and then she was smiling again. I know I'm no glossy vidstar and I'm more than a trifle ugly and that smile shifting into neutral then back on automatic hurt me.

But I just bored on in. "I'm Sam McCord, ma'am." I didn't mean it the way it sounded, like I was on the brag or anything. I just wanted her to know who she was dealing with.

"I'm Jennifer," she said in that silky, husky voice of hers, and I just slipped farther into the pit as slick as anything.

"Ma'am, I'm wondering if I might talk with you a moment?"

The one at the table I didn't know sat up all dark and ugly and said, "Go plug in your computer and get straight, rockdog. The lady is with us."

"Haydock—" Jennifer began but I stopped her with a gesture and turned to look at him.

"I'm talking to the lady, mister." I said it kind of low because I was shy and hated bar fights.

"Haydock," Old Buchanan said, "let

it be."

"But we were talking to Jen!" he complained.

Buchanan smiled his tired old smile and said, "McCord is just in from the rocks. . . Right, Sam?" I nodded and he said soothingly to Haydock, "You know how that is, Joe."

"There are plenty of other girls," he grumbled. I could see the butt of a Two Millimeter Colt Laser in his belt and I edged up closer to the table.

"Leave it alone, Joe," Marham said quietly. "This here's Sam McCord."

Haydock flushed. "So? I can pay for her time as well as he can." Marham and Buchanan were very quiet and I could hear Jennifer inhale deep, about to burst out.

"Mister Haydock," I said, "I think you should apologize."

"Huh? What for? To *you*?" He sneered and shoved his chair back a little.

"No. To her."

"*Her*? For what? What did I say that could insult her?"

Marham looked at Buchanan and they both looked at me. Jennifer said, "Now wait a minute—!"

I went across the table at him and Buchanan and Marham shoved their chairs back just in time. It wasn't much of a fight and after it was over the Patrol hauled him off for possessing a laser within a dome area. First they took him to the hospital, but long before then Jenny and I were in bed.

You know, you go all your life looking and not even knowing you are looking, except now and again. For a time there I thought I liked blondes and just kept on ignoring the fact that



the ones that tugged at my guts were brunettes. That's how stupid a man can get. You think maybe you'd like some clean-faced Miss Prim from a clean, antiseptic megacity but when you get up close you find she bores you and the real fun comes from a woman who can laugh in bed.

I'd been a space miner for fifteen years, lasering out the rich stuff from moons and asteroids and space jetsam and spending the treasure in bars and whorehouses and always looking. After I got that big strike out on Iapetus, around Saturn, I came all the way back to Earth just to look for a good woman. I tried those computer matching outfits and I had what few Earthside friends I had bringing them around. But none of them were it.

Oh, I spent some time in bed with more than one but there were damn few I wanted to come back more than a time or two more. Maybe it's the kind of women they grow now, like mushrooms in the dark, all crowded into those terrible megacities, living in tiny boxes and worrying.

But my Jenny now, she was a Mountain Woman. She was strong where some other woman might be tough or hard. She was sweet, but she had a temper like a cutting laser gone zongo.

Right then, at first, all I knew was that she was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen and later, in bed, I found her the hottest. Now I shame myself to admit it, but you really do expect a whore to be good in bed so that part was no surprise. But knowing what I know now I look back at that in wonder. Now what in the twelve moons did she see in me?

We made love, and it was love, not just sex, and afterwards I started laughing. "What are you laughing at, you big goon?" she demanded, laughing.

"I just feel good, Jen." I sat up on my elbow and looked at her with her big dark halo of hair spread out over the pillow and her skin all smooth and apricot-colored against the sheets. I wanted to ask her about herself but it sounded so much like the classic What's a Nice Girl like You Doing in a Place Like This? that I just couldn't.

I think she sensed this and she started gabbing away about mining and Callisto and the girls at Big Jupe's. Then she started talking about herself and I just felt it was the straight input.

"I grew up in Greater Dakota and lived in Megadenver and in a shabby dome in the Phoenix area. My father was a programmer for American Algae so I picked up the stuff pretty easy. When I got fed up I signed up for here. I got myself a computer programmer's card and shipped out."

"You going to get rich and go back?" I asked.

She smiled and touched my face. "I don't know. It's freer out here. Earth, even Luna, is so . . . filled up. Even Mars. You still must live in domes and you don't have any other advantage that I can see."

I sighed. "Yeah, civilization is catching up. I heard talk of a plan to terraform Titan. I sure hope they get that stardrive perfected soon."

"Oh, yes!" she said excitedly. "And the men out here are just the kind that should go. Those cleanboots back home would never make it unless they



had a slidewalk to take them there.”

I laughed and fell back on the pillow. That’s when I knew Jenny was a Mountain Woman for sure. Three, four hundred years ago our kind was the type that lived out past the edges of civilization. And liked it.

She climbed up on top of me and started kissing like she was purely zongo and I kissed back and off we went again.

We stayed together pretty much all the time until my two megastars were gone and I had only my stake left. It wasn’t that Jenny didn’t want to stay with me without money but there was just a lot of other dudes who were interested in her time. Even so she spent an awful lot of her free time just bumming around with me, talking and psyching and getting high together.

But she did have her job. She hadn’t touched a puncher in two years because everyone figured she was a damn sight better at psyching space zongos and bedding them down than she was playing with a 1060/20.

There was a rumor going around a few years back that all the girls were head psychers employed by the benevolent monster of The Company to keep us all from going *completely* zongo. There might be a lot of truth in it, either accidentally or by plan. There wasn’t a rockdog born that wouldn’t rather talk it out with a pretty girl who was intelligent and sympathetic than with some company shrink that you couldn’t be positive wouldn’t keep a dossier on you for the Company to peek into. There’s a lot fewer official shrinks in the Ring Worlds, and even on Mars, than there are on Earth, proportionally.

You must understand that the girls on the Outer Planets just aren’t the money grubbing wrecks you find Earthside. Not at all. They’re part nurse, part home, part fun, part relief and one hellava lot of psychiatrist to hundreds of tough bastards who’d never trust any man with cleaner hands than they had.

But eventually my money ran out and I had to go back out in my battered old Lafitte Class GM. I wanted to get back fast so I teamed up with Pablo Turner. We’d chopped rocks together before, out on Phoebe, which is just about as far out as you can get, commercially, because only System Explorations has been out to Uranus.

I wanted to re-name *Nebuchadnezzar II* the *Jenny* but Control informed me with what I thought was unnecessary snotiness that there were already two *Jennys*, a *Jennifer*, a *J. A. Johnson* and a *Queen Jennifer* logged.

I grumbled a lot and Pablo grinned at me and we took the *Neb* out towards Hathor and Gilgamesh, the eighth and ninth moons. They’re retrograde and a lot of smart types figure one or more of them might be captured moonlets from another system. They’ve been pretty well explored and picked over but Pablo suggested maybe we could try the area back along each orbit because we’d found in the past that with so many chunks of rocks rotating around Jupiter that there had been more than one collision in the past and the space was full of fragments. And more than one fragment had turned out to be core and rich as hell.

I wasn’t any too eager to be gone long because I didn’t want anything to happen to Jenny. I wasn’t very worried



about anything much physical happening to her, except the things she'd want to happen, because everyone liked her. Let some cleanboot right off the ship, like Haydock, do anything but be nice and polite to her and he'd get his gut stomped. We liked Jennifer and she liked us.

She had nursed more than one busted digger back to health in the spare room. Guys like Old Man Campbell that had had a suit failure out on Io and that young stud Calkins that got in the way of two chucks of rock determined to join forces out by Vishnu.

When everyone had seen me spending every credit on Jennifer I'd taken a lot of kidding, but I'd gotten a lot of stories about her, too. How she'd cuddled Landers for a day and a half until the screamies went away after he was stuck in that collapsing shuttle to Europa. She'd listened to White's stories about the early days and wrote letters to Maibe's girl for him. She bandaged feet and kissed away the scaries and settled down more than one rockape who wanted to tear up the place and put it in oblivion orbit.

So we all liked Jennifer. We liked Patty and Barbara and Louise and Carol and Reiko and Elinor, too. They were first rate girls, every one. There had been a few bad apples that just hadn't fit, like that queen bitch Thea. She had really enjoyed her position as a Rare and Beautiful Item and had sunk her spurs into any digger that passed close. They'd fixed her, though, by putting her on a shuttle to Titan with glowing promises of Big Money and even bigger power because she'd be further out where women of any

kind, much less beautiful ones, are really rare. What she didn't know was that the crew was a trio of the roughest rockmaulers out there and that the orbit to Saturn was the Long Way Round, the long, easy, fuel-saving way with four months of nothing to do but hump the new one in the narrow bunks and devise new amusements. We understand she's settled down now and is doing a fine job in Rigg's whorehouse.

But it was Jennifer that was Numero Uno. Even the other girls felt this way and brought her those tales of woe that are every woman's and certainly every whore's lot. Foyster would get hung up on Patty and get to mooning around and forget to check his valves. Sanchez would pull a knife on Deckinger over Louise or Barbara would find Patten hiding in her closet when she was with one of the boys.

So Jennifer would take them aside and have a talk with them. Mostly she fixed it up. Sometimes she couldn't and a committee of hardrock clowns would get him squared away in an alley somewhere. Maybe someone would drop the word to a Company dispatcher and the troublemaker would find himself activated for the Company, obliged to put in some time on a traffic post or a maintenance dome on another moon. If it looked like trouble they might transfer him out to Saturn, selling his contract, if he had one, to Ring Worlds Mining Company.

Some thought Jennifer had more to do with how things went around Calisto than Kaufman or Woolston, who were Company honchos. The Company gave us hints where to mine and they handled all the processing and



shipping, once we tugged a chunk into mining orbit or brought down a shipload of high grade. They built the traffic control domes all over the Jovian system and shipped in the computers that kept track of all the catalogued rocks. They owned all the domes and leased space inside.

The System Miners Union looked out for us with the Company and watchdogged those that still had a company contract to work out, plugging away in a Company hole somewhere. The positions of the moons told us how long we could work, because when we went into Jupe's shadow it got mighty cold for those few hours.

But it was Jenny and the girls who showed us how to feel about it all. And it was Jenny that had the girls feeling the way they did.

A couple of times Jenny had gone into the glums, they told me, and there were fights all over and work slacked off and Kinney got killed and Lapidus got a hand crushed. Then she brightened up and was her old self again and things changed. Alva stopped drinking that slop he made himself, Scithers stopped writing on his pornographic novel, Martinez gave up trying to bunk down with Tiger Tom Hulan and let little Reiko talk him back into the fold with that terrific body talking of hers.

Well, all this was in my mind as Pablo and I sat on a bony rock gutting out the core of nearly pure titanium we'd found. I found that I kept thinking about her and thinking and thinking. Pablo would speak to me and more than likely he'd have to speak twice and that simply is no way for a miner in space to be.

But I just kept thinking about the way her mouth was when it was smiling and how she'd let go and give a really big laugh, not holding it back prissy like, but big and loud. No hee-hawing of coarse or anything, just good deep laughter.

I'd think about the way this part of her would curve into that part of her, all smooth and flawless, with that fine texture of skin. I think about the way her nipples were pink and harder than her breasts, or how taut and flat her stomach was, or how she liked to dig into her food.

We were out there for three months and it seemed like a year. Pablo is my best friend and I'd trust him with my tanks, but he's not Jennifer Ann Johnson and never will be. We played chess and shared the chores and looked at the year-old vidshows that had come out on the supply ships. He browsed through my library and I looked through his. I re-read "Paradise Lost" and the new translation of "The Odyssey" but I just kept thinking about Jennifer.

Finally I decided that I must be in love.

I had never felt quite that way before so I figured that must be it. "Let's go back," I said to Pablo over the interphone. He shut off the laser and flipped back the shield and looked at me. He didn't even say anything, he just started gathering up the equipment. He knew I didn't mean just back to the ship.

Now I've been cracking rocks from Luna to the Ring Worlds for a ding short of fifteen years. I've been drunk in bars they haven't even built yet. I've bedded all three races and one zongo



redhead who insisted she was a descendant of the Martian Imperial race. I've been shipwrecked, swum the Pole Canal by moonlight, and been in jail. I've run scared and I've run happy. I've been shot at and I've shot back.

I worked my way through to a Master's Degree in Geology, which is the admittance card to the System Miners Union, by running thermals and waiting tables and working a sea ranch.

And I've been in love before.

But not with anyone like Jenny.

I knew that hardrocks fall for Jenny every week. This was nothing new, for her or for Callisto. Every girl, even old Graniteface Dietz, had three or four guys crazy about her and jealous of each other.

But *I* hadn't fallen in love in years and every love affair is unique and very, very personal.

Jenny, now, she kept herself really above all that. She never showed any particular liking for one man over another. Even when she was nursing some busted-up digger and slipping him a little good stuff she didn't make it seem partial. Everyone understood how it was.

So when Jennifer Ann Johnson fell for me, the dome fell in, too.

Pablo and I just took a swipe back across the orbits, cutting in close to Hercules and Minerva, and catching hell from a traffic station. We dropped down fast and I left Pablo to take the *Neb* through the decon and cargo lifts and de-briefing. I damned near ran through decontamination and was still wearing my suit jumper when I lifted Jenny off her feet and headed for the back door. Everyone laughed, but only

after they saw that she liked it.

After all the kissing and hugging and grabbing and love-making was over and we were both reasonably accurate representations of rational beings again we lay there, all tangled up and warm, looking up, out through the pressure window, right up through the outer dome.

Jupiter, the Big One, was arcing across the piece of sky we could see like a brilliant balloon tethering right outside. The stars were clear and cold, bright hard points of light in all sorts of colors. It was the usual edge-on shot of Home Galaxy but that night it was special and friendly and *ours*.

That I was in love with her was no secret nor did it cause any astonishment. Everyone, including Jenny, seemed to know it before I did. I figured I was just the latest in line, and that hurt a little bit, but I was being realistic. I thought.

With her head on my shoulder and with me breathing in stray strands of her long black hair I just took the Big Jump and told her I loved her.

"I love you," was the way I phrased it. Hardly original, but certainly sincere. But, hell, I'd done that two, three times already, mostly in bed, but once outside the dome, out by the monument to the first touchdown, where they have that slagmelt monument to Ballard, who had died there. That had been the last time, with suit-to-suit radio and me not seeing her face with the visor down. I'd right away kidded it up and got off the subject.

But lying there naked and our bodies all loved out for a little while, I just had to say it again. It had been building



pressure in me for months and it just had to come out.

I meant it, of course, because I've never said it to anyone that I didn't mean to and meant, and never will. But I didn't think she'd do anything more than be nice about it, just like I knew she did to all the others. I was prepared for that, for the smoothing over, for the kindness and careful words. What I wasn't prepared for was her losing her mind.

She said it, right into my neck, right into my heart. "I love you, too," she said. I thought she was being polite, using that therapy that she must use on all the rock-happy jokers that drifted by, hungry for a soft woman, starving for an untaped female voice being kind and loving.

"I mean it, Sam McCord, I really mean it."

You could have used the inside of me for paint. I was as gooshy as hell inside. I wanted to ask, *Do you mean it, do you really mean it?* But I couldn't, I just couldn't. Somehow that might break the moment, and that's the last thing I wanted. If I lost my air tomorrow or the dome cracked I wanted to go remembering that moment.

There is no moment in life quite like the first time someone you love tells you they love you, too.

We quick-froze that moment in our memories forever, and then started laughing like crazy people. We hugged and kissed and laughed and made love all over again.

We talked until Ganymede rose, which was around dawn. I told her about my daddy dying in the rustspots on Mars and how it was trying to get

an education, the only passport out of the mud there is. She told me about living in those solid-packed Earth cities and the crime and paranoia and filth and how desperately she wanted *out*.

Briefly we mentioned going back to Earth, and for an even briefer moment of living there. By Earth standards we were pretty well off financially and could live up in the air, on top of those massive pyramids of concrete and flesh. But we both discovered neither wanted to go back, maybe not even for a visit.

We talked about the Big Jump, the long trip to the stars and the any-day-now breakthrough that General Systems had been promising. We talked about a green valley of our own, on a planet somewhere where the air was fresh, and of raising a family of tall sons and beautiful daughters, six or eight maybe, a lot more than the legal limit of two.

We fell asleep in each other's arms, a scarred-up old miner of thirty-three and a Company whore of twenty-five. But we were lovers now and that changes the universe.

The shuttle from Ganymede woke us with the deep thrums through the hard rock from the landing slab outside the dome complex. She woke up smiling and I probably had a grin on, too. It took us a long time getting up but no one was complaining. Eventually we dressed and went down to breakfast and right then we were faced with Problem Number One.

There was Wes Norman, fresh in from a strike on Ganymede and wanting a woman. "Jenny!" he shouted and came at her, right through the tables



and that shift's drinkers and gamblers.

"Let me handle it!" she whispered fiercely to me. I glowered and was jealous and angry. She met him, smiling, and my fists clenched as he swept her up, both of them laughing. He tried hauling her off to her room right then but she wiggled away and tried to distract him. "Not now, Wes. Listen, you know that new girl Millie? Why don't you give her a tour of duty and show her what the men are like out here? She was talking about you last week."

"Nooooo," he laughed. "I've been thinking 'bout you for two whole tours out there in those zongo pits and you ain't about to get away!" He hugged her to him and she seemed to disappear into his arms.

"The lady passes, Wes," I told him.

He swiveled his big shaggy head towards me and squinted. "Butt out, short-timer. This is between Miss Jennifer and me." He turned back to her and flashed a company credit card, a gold one, with four big megastars.

"Lookahere, Jen," he said, all happy and hot. "I'll show you a *goood* time, honest! After, we'll go over to Quartermaster and I'll buy you one of those new shimmer dresses from Terra!"

"Please, Wes, another time, huh?"

He grabbed her arm, gently but as firm as a vise, a horny, good-hearted but chrome-steel-tough rocker from the Big Vacuum. "Come on, Jenny! I'm spending big this trip!"

"It's not that, Wes. You ought to know that—"

"Goddamn it, Jenny!" he said and tried to kiss her.

I hit him.

He outweighs me by forty, maybe

fifty pounds and I was between him and the long-sought object of his affection. It was one hell of a fight. I dimly heard Jenny yell at Tiny to keep out of it with his billie. Wes and I wrecked furniture for ten minutes until neither one of us could lift an arm to hit.

I was told later that a company monitor busted in but that both Wes and I snarled at him and he skipped.

But that bloody bastard was still on all fours, glaring at me. "You goddamn zongo rocker! You're trying to hog that girl all to yourself!"

"You are one hundred percent *right!*" I snarled at him.

"How do you get off hoarding the best woman on three moons?"

"Twenty-two moons," I said and tried to hit him. She was as good as anything they had out around Saturn and probably better.

"You got no call to hog a woman to yourself, McCord," he said and spit out a gobbet of blood. There was a sort of puzzled whine in his voice. "You know what women are out here *for*, don't you?"

"Shut your stupid hatch, Wes! I don't give a whistle what any of the others are here for. *This one is mine!*"

Wes sighed and watched me tongue out a chunk of my inner cheek. "You aim to fight the whole moon system, Sam?" he asked.

That stopped me. God knows he was right. I couldn't fight every rockhound in one moon system, much less the drift in from Saturn. That brought me down really fast.

Jennifer jumped in then and took us both off to the kitchen and swabbed



us down, clucking at us and giving us hell and finally making us laugh all at the same time.

Wes Norman looked at me across the table as Jenny was putting some antiseptic on his swollen lip. "You crazy spacer, don't you think this has happened before? You remember Wyszkowski and that redhead on Europa? He holed up in that maintenance dome with a drill laser for over two weeks before they got close enough to gas him."

"Yeah, I remember that nut."

"He was a smart nut, buddy, with a degree more than either of us. But he went rocky, that's what. Remember Ben Bailes? He kidnapped that cute blonde on Iapetus and stole a shuttle! And she didn't even *like* him!"

"But we're not like that . . ."

"Hear about Mebane? Atkins? Boris Slatzer? Remember how that mucker from the big titanium rock out near Enceladus got that Hungarian girl killed?"

"Yeah, I remember."

"And you think *you're* going to tie up the best damn girl in two planet systems? Hah!" He leaned back, wincing and flexing his right hand.

"Goddamnit, Wes, does everybody think she's going to go on and on until she's a little grey-haired old hooker jawing with dusty old crunkers on retirement pay? She's a human being, man, and one of the best! Doesn't she have rights?"

"Rights!" He leaned towards me, then sucked air as he bobbled Jenny's hand and gave himself an extra heavy dose of antiseptic in his cheek wound. "Rights, McCord? What rights are you

talking about? She knew what she was getting in to when she signed up. The Company psychs made sure of that and the cost accountants double checked. Going back in anything less than five years costs them money."

He paused and fingered a tooth. "She's been doing it three, four years now, Sam, while you were out in the Ring." He glanced up at Jenny and smiled, then sucked air again as his lip split and he tasted blood.

Wes looked back at me and said, "And I think she likes it. She's someone here. She's *valuable* here. She's useful, goddamnit." I threw a look at Jenny but she was concentrating on wiping him clean. I was still pretty much dripping.

Wes hit the table with his hand and snapped at me. "So who the blue suzie are you to take her away from a job which she likes, which she is marvelously suited for, which is making her rich, *which she does better than anyone out here*, and which gets her the love, admiration and respect of the toughest bunch of bastards in the whole frelking solar system?"

I hated to admit it, but he had a point. I just didn't like it at all, but his logic was perfect. Who the hell *was* I to do that? I was some kind of zongo tank thief, huh?

Screw that. I was Jennifer Johnson's lover, that's who I was.

The word must have gone around fast. We weren't out of the kitchen before I smelled trouble. Rockers were drifting in, some curious, some neutral and waiting on more than rumor, and some were already angry. I was challenged to four fights before Jennifer



and I got to the front door.

"Okay, see my second," I said, and waved at Wes, who scowled, then shrugged. "Line 'em up and give me some time in between to wash off the blood."

"Sam . . ." she said, touching me.

"Where you going with Jenny?" Ridpath growled.

"We're going to get married, that's what, you cleanboot."

"*Married?*" It was a chorus.

I glared at the whole damn bunch of them, holding Jenny against me. "Yeah, *married*. Now you are all invited. Come or not." I turned towards the street. "Come on, Jenny."

It was one hell of a wedding. By the time we'd filled out the forms and found out where Brother Donaho was digging and got him back and into his Brotherhood of the Way robes the place was filling up.

No one had ever been married on Callisto before. Some had left to get married and two or three married couples had been there in the past but this was the first real live marriage and even the rockapes who wanted to slice me into assay samples were getting excited about the marriage.

I hadn't asked Jenny and in the confusion of finding out there was no regular method of getting fused we were damned near walking up the aisle before I stopped her.

"Uh, listen, Jen . . . I hadn't had a chance to, ah . . ."

"I want to marry you, Sam McCord. Come hell or high vacuum."

I let out a wild whoop and kissed her hard, then I tried to sober up. "Listen, Jenny. Moskatel has been ra-

dioing to every flying rock and rocket around. Jimmy tells me the controller computer has so many ships in orbit half of them will never get down. Every rocker, grounder, company fink, whore, miner and frelking soul in the system is on his way here. Most of them want to fight me. Some may want only to toss me out of the dome. Without a suit, of course. I'm lousy bridegroom material. You may be a widow before you are a wife."

"They're not all against you, Sam. Some are on our side."

"Or your side," I grinned. "What Jenny wants, Jenny gets, and I better be a good husband or else." Already this division of opinion had caused a few fights. About a hundred.

We kept out of sight until Brother Donaho was ready. Pablo Turner was best man and Wes Norman gave the bride away. The girls from Big Jupe's were the bridesmaids and a few came over from Big Nell's place at Winecup on Ganymede. They cried a lot.

Old Man Russell was there to lend the Company presense. Everyone figured that meant the Company was for the liaison, but he didn't look it. He looked worried.

We did it in the biggest arena we had, the Union hall. The place was packed and Brother Donaho was trying to remember that portion of the service. With every ounce counting he hadn't brought that part along. Jennifer was in the Super's office getting ready.

I walked out there and waited until all the shouting and booing and curses died down. I just looked at them, with my fear and my anger churning me up inside.



"Okay," I said, "so you hate me. I'm a dirty tank thief. My gyros have tumbled. I'm pure zongo. Any of you that want to discuss this with me in a physical way talk to Wes Norman. He has the appointment book. It has twenty-one names in it—"

"Thirty-nine."

"—of the clowns who want to contest this affair. He'll give you a number for faster service. I'll fight every one of you and I'll keep fighting every one of you until you get this through your head. Jenny Johnson is my girl. *Just* my girl. *All* my girl."

There were some really fearsome growls but I plunged right ahead. "You can look, you can talk, and if Jenny likes you she'll do with you what she will. But you aren't paying and she ain't taking. And I'm not coming after you with a laser if she comforts someone close like. But let *one* of you morbs try to *make* Jenny take you upstairs and I'm coming after you."

I glared at them. And waited.

There was a long pause. I heard someone sigh. Someone in the back said wearily, "Goddamn it . . ."

Then Lichtman cleared his throat and said quietly, "Wes . . . take my name off that list."

"Me, too," Dirty Bob said. So did Robbins and Morra and Geis, who could lick me easy.

Wes grinned at me. "Happy honeymoon," he said.

**I** HAD TO FIGHT A FEW, of course, but I don't think their hearts were in it, just their egos. Wes conned them into waiting several days, until after the

honeymoon, which started two days later when most of the big party was too drunk or too spaced to move.

For three days we just wandered around, making love and moonwalking and finding out about each other. There were a few hardheads that hadn't gotten the Word and if I was away from Jenny for a minute some ziggler would take a swing at me. Some frelk tried to beam me from an alley over by Stores but his aim was off.

But that part of it didn't worry me. We had become a sort of Legend in Our Own Time. Those crazy hard-rockers clued the new ones in and sent the whole story out on the transmissions to every little cored out and pressurized rockhaven in a hundred orbits. Even the ones still on the list drifted away, getting suddenly curious about a new chunk of ore sighted over by Minerva or just plain scratching their names off. The fights I had I won. I told Jenny it was because my heart was pure. She said it was because I was too stupid to feel pain.

No, I stopped worrying very much about the miners. It was the Company that got on my tail.

I went back to snagging rocks with Pablo for awhile but the lure of Jenny was pretty strong. Pablo would sigh and we'd cut the trip short and come home none too rich. I tried a tour on the ground, running tests on samples and grading ore and doing assays and sleeping with Jenny every night, but I couldn't take it very long.

Jenny sensed it and suggested I go out with Pablo again as soon as he came back with the *Nebuchadnezzar*. I jumped at the chance and for a mo-



ment I thought of asking her to go along. But not only was it too dangerous, but she had her job, too.

Jenny was doing a little programming now and spending less time either up or downstairs at Big Jupe's. I never asked and she never volunteered any information about what she did. Everyone else was too scared to, I think.

So Pablo and I went out to see if we could find any good free-floating mines. This time, though, there was a paid up life insurance policy in the Company safe and a will, giving the *Neb* to Pablo. None of us bothered much with life insurance and without a will a ship usually went to the partner. Most of us just socked away a grubstake and raised hell with the rest.

But no more. I was a serious miner now, with a wife and, who knows, maybe a son. He wouldn't be the first child born out here but if he happened he'd be *my* first and that counted.

Pablo and I snagged ourselves a beauty out between Vishnu and Thor that assayed out at 12% usable and it was as big as a small mountain. We sold the *Neb* and bought a nearly new Cortez Explorer with a full Tectron rig and bull lasers.

Jennifer made me sock what was left into the company bank and Wes joined us and we made an unspectacular but profitable trip scouring the same orbit.

On our second trip out in the *Jennylove* we went out beyond Thor, the last moon (if you call a twenty-mile diameter rock a moon) and found ourselves something *strange*. It was about the size of the dome at Winecup but it was *so* odd we figured it had to come

from another star system.

We tugged it all the way back to Callisto, grateful for the big Borg engines, and the Company scientists got all excited and ended up shipping it all the way back to Earth almost in one piece.

That one set us up mighty fine in the money department because the government latched onto that one and paid top money. The rumors were getting thicker about the star ship and I was ready to start talking passage money when the Company decided I was trouble.

I figured it all out later. Some of those clowns that pulled their names off the fighting list out there in front of everyone just couldn't swallow it, so they went to Old Man Russell and Speer and Rothman. It's the policy of company managers everywhere and everywhen to keep things running smoothly. When complaints grow to too big a pile they feel they must do something to make things run smoothly again.

*Sam McCord is tying up a company asset*, seemed to be the conclusion. Anything on the moons the Jupiter Mining and Metals Company considered *their* asset, including people, or maybe especially people.

They did something to Wilton at the Union, I don't know what. Bought him, scared him, whatever. The Union activated the emergency clause on our next trip out. I was ordered to take over a one-man control dome on useless old worked out Gilgamesh, ninth moon out and pretty much pure, unrich basalt.

Both Wes and Pablo tried to take the turn for me but Wilton was very



stern. I said what-the-hell and suited up. I thought it was a quickie deal, that they needed a helper out there or something, and hell, we rockjumpers always pitch in when needed. I thought it was a little odd that they didn't let Wes or Pablo sub for me but I was never one to ask for special favors or to shirk my share of the work, so I signed in.

Then I found out I was in a sort of space limbo. No one came right out and said they expected me to divorce Jenny and no one *really* said I didn't have to actually divorce her as long as she went back to work. All I got were these sanctimonious blitherings from Old Man Russell over the radio and Woolston's legal talk and Rothman's hints and Calahan's yappings and Wilton's evasions.

What it came down to was I was stuck there. Oh, any passing ship could have taken me off but I'd be ass-deep in trouble with the Union and the ship in trouble with the Company. So I wouldn't ask anyone to help *that* way. They certainly must have bought Wilton and Calahan lock, stock and air tank to keep me tied up that way.

They shouldn't have done that. I don't like to be threatened. I don't even like the threat of a threat. And I didn't know what pressures they were bringing on Jenny. I talked to her easy enough and I talked to some others around there and there was nothing obvious pressuring her. But she *had* talked to Russell and I could just imagine what he had told her.

Bring him home safe. Duty. Work. These poor miners. Safe. And so forth.

I wasn't worried about the relation-

ship she and I had, I just didn't want those company ziggles to pressure her in *any* way or to give some hairy rock-monkey nerve enough to give her trouble.

Wes Norman had taken the *Jenny-love* out to Titan with a transshipped load of airmaker parts and drill lasers and such since that was the best way to make money with the ship since I was tied up and Pablo was nursing a crunched foot he got the day after they dropped me. I had only the computer radio to talk to the ore ships floating by and the rock jockeys and the direct video line to either Callisto or Gany-mede when they were in sight.

But I *could* talk.

I told the story to every miner riding rocks within transmitter distance and got word to Io and Europa and even out to the Company station on Minerva where I found a sympathetic ear. The Guggenheim people at the Observatory on Amalthea ate it up.

The Company wanted to shut me up—that much I knew without monitoring a few calls—but they couldn't without shutting off my power and I was self-contained. Of course, they could have shut down the station but then what excuse could they use for keeping me there? They were using a pretty creaky old ruling as it was.

I started getting offers from some pretty independent and snarly old rockers about coming to get me off that rock but I had to talk them out of it. If I left the station without being properly relieved I could kiss the Union goodbye and there was the only living I knew how to make. They'd boot my ass back to Earth—*sans* Jenny—and the



divorce would be effective if not legal.

So I sat and thought.

I got word to Jenny to sit tight and she got word to me, relayed from rocker to mine ship to flying cosmic pebbles. They'd cut off direct communication with varying stories about equipment failures and "She's out now" and sudden interruptions. But we got word to each other anyway.

The story got to Titan and was waiting for Wes Norman when he arrived. He waited only as long as it took to put a payload aboard and then he started tearassing back.

I had to get up a plan that would make the Company think it had a tiger by the tail or just want to leave us the hell alone. And, man, I felt like a tiger! I was *mad*! Those frelking ziggles! No goddamn multibillion dollar interplanetary corporation is going to keep Sam McCord from his woman!

I didn't have a hellava lot to do on that traffic station but think, since the computers watched the rocks and ships and talked to the other computers at the other stations. So I looked at all the facets of my situation.

The emergency clause had me tight. If I didn't man the computers and direct traffic they'd have me for violation. If I left they'd have me. All they had to do was keep me supplied with "all necessary provisions and standard comforts" and I was stuck on that mined-out moonlet.

I thought of plans. Plans were radioed in. Some of them were pretty violent, but then you don't have sissies chasing rocks in Jupiter orbit. One plan was to send all the robot ore ships into collision orbit. Another was to bomb

the Company headquarters. At least four men wanted to slice Wilton and replace him with someone who'd chuck the restrictions. I was against that most of the time. (I felt like doing it myself a couple of times.) But Wilton had been elected and the elections had just been held not six months before. Everyone—including Wilton shortly—knew he'd never be re-elected for turning Company tool so I hoped for his sake they paid him enough.

Old Dan Alderson landed and insisted I take two of his laser drills adapted to autocannons. When I saw I couldn't talk him out of it I humored him by accepting them and we mounted them well outside the dome area and hooked them up.

I went back to thinking. With the Company against me they had my own Union boxing me in, so the pressure really was on. What I needed to do was to use their own weapons against them, use their own force to box them.

So I thought of something.

My best friends came to my aid. They killed Jennifer.

There was this fight between Pablo and Wes right out in front of Big Jupe's, right out of a video western. Wes Norman made it known he was taking over Jennifer and to hell with Sam McCord. Pablo Turner just rightly didn't like that at all. They started battering at each other and Pablo was limping around on his crunched foot and getting the hell beat out of him so he just grabbed this laser away from Blackjack Peteler who just happened to be taking it over to the repair shop.

Pablo swung around with the ruby glowing and sliced off the top of the



statue outside Big Jupe's and cut down through Jennifer McCord as she run out to try and stop it. Everyone said it was a terrible sight. Sliced in two she was. Blood everywhere.

Turner and Norman were so shocked, so contrite they stopped their fight and there was a burial right then. Doc Norbon and Judge Zandt saw the whole thing. The doctor signed the death certificate and the Judge convened court right after the funeral and let Pablo go free because it was an accident that saddened us all.

A hat was passed and a collection made for the funeral and an obsolete messenger rocket was used to send her body into orbit, degrading swiftly into Jupiter. Every one of those hand-picked miners was sorry as hell about the whole thing. So they held an Irish wake and everyone got drunk.

The Company didn't find out about it until the monitors came into Big Jupe's looking after all the noise.

Wes Norman and Pablo Turner, who was limping something fierce, got so drunk and contrite they decided to go into the rock catching business together again and took off while the wake was still going on.

And that's how they sneaked Jennifer to me under the guise of "all necessary provisions and standard comforts."

It was too good a story to keep quiet for too long and when the Company finally heard they boiled out to that rock in a fast executive Lockheed. I just don't know what got into my computers. I was just a rock splitter and didn't know all the finer points of electronic wonders. I apologized all to hell

about it but those damn computers couldn't seem to tell that beautiful Lockheed Mark IV from a wild rock in collision orbit! Since I'd locked both my laser cannons into it to repel those pesky meteorites I couldn't do anything about it since I'd lost the tools to uncouple it. Drifted away, I guess.

The Company gave up.

Jennifer and I had a beautiful honeymoon for eleven months. Pablo and Wes brought Doc Norbon in when Johnny was born and they were all amazed to find Jennifer alive. "Why, I must have been drunk," the Doc said.

Of course, Doc got the mistake over Jenny's death straightened out. The Union held a special election and voted in a new group of officers. There was a lot of talk about pulling out of the United System government and become a free group. The Union was the voice of the miners and the miners were 95% of the people around both Jupiter and Saturn.

"No body likes an absentee landlord," Wes Norman said, "especially when he's a money-grubbing snot."

They had announced the perfected stardrive units while Jen was still pregnant and the *New Worlds* was being built in orbit. The McCord family was the 415th to be accepted.

Jenny and I are happy to move on. The last ship out from Terra brought out a preacher with a briefcase full of church plans and a woman who sniffed at the girls in Big Jupe's.

*New Worlds* is going towards Alpha Centauri, of course. But after that colony gets going—providing there is a suitable planet—they plan to go out further.

(Continued on page 130)

**AMAZING**



# SMILEAWAY

*Herewith, a quickie, something to squeeze in between your luncheon snack and a quick (illegal) doze . . .*

## BRUCE PALEY

**J**OE CALLAHAN rubbed his head, wrestled with a creepy tingle, gave in to it, and felt it fade and die. He took a long drag on a cigarette and smashed it out in the ashtray, trying to understand what was happening to him. No good. He couldn't keep his mind on one thought for more than a second or two. And today's events were the worst yet. This morning he was laid off from a job he didn't remember having, relived certain episodes of his childhood, and found himself engaged to a strange girl he hadn't met yet—Ellen something or other.

When Joe finished telling his story, Dr. Freundlich jotted down some notes and lit his pipe. Joe had never been to a psychiatrist before, yet Dr. Freundlich looked remarkably like Joe'd imagined he would—grey hair, thick eyebrows, pipe, goatee . . . sort of a latter day Edward G. Robinson. His name, in fact, was Edwin, changed from Edward.

"Mr. Callahan," Edwin began, "Joe . . . this is your fourth visit, and I might as well tell you." Joe gave a start. "Since the Sleep Bill, I've handled a few cases similar to yours. Reality Transferences, we call them. It's a direct result of Smileaways. By the way, Joe, how long have you been on Smileaways?" This time Joe remained per-

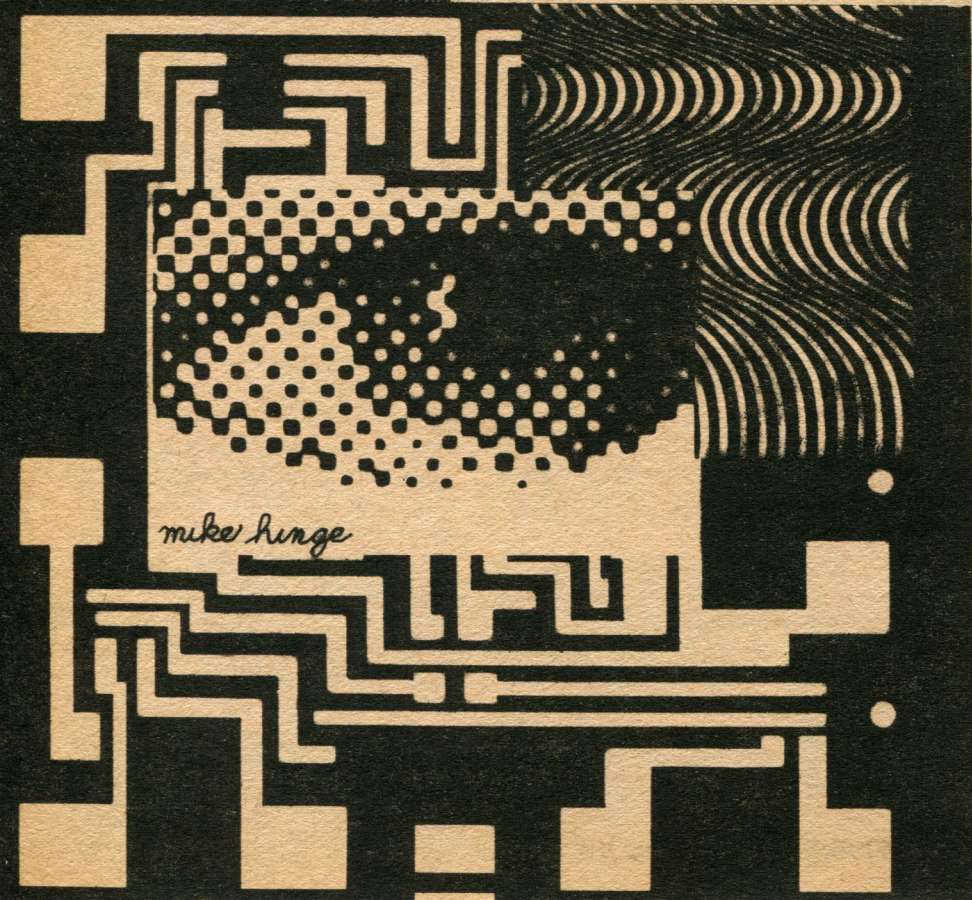
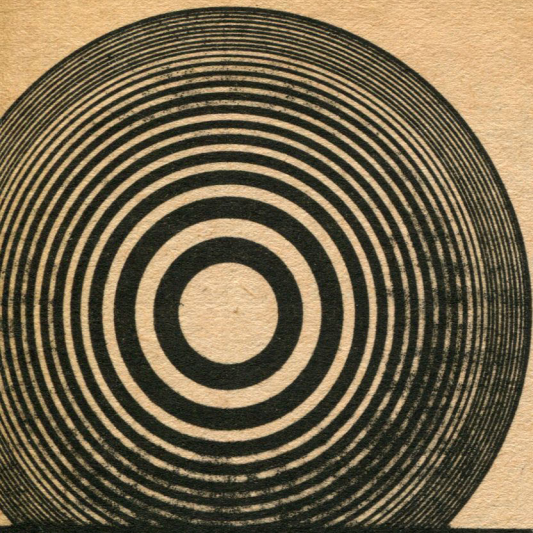
fectly still. Fourth visit? Sleep Bill? Reality Transferences? Smileaways? What the hell were Smileaways? It was all new to him.

"Am I in an insane asylum?"

"No," Freundlich replied. "Mr. Callahan," he continued, "it's rather simple. When sleep was outlawed, the government issued stabilizers to each and every citizen. Babies receive them at birth. Their purpose was to replenish the body, which normally took place during sleep. But they had another purpose, one far more important really. As you know, when we used to sleep, we were plagued with dreams, actually the outpouring of the contents of the unconscious mind into the conscious mind, thru what is known allegorically as the Freudian Dream Gap—the FDG. It was found that after a certain period without sleep, usually 48 hours, the gap would open automatically, thus permitting the entities of the unconscious mind to roam, shall we say, within your conscious mind. Stabilizers sealed this gap, save for a small, minute portion of it, which was always open anyway, known as the Permanent Imagination Gap, PIG, if you will. A poor joke as far as I'm concerned but nonetheless . . . anyway, Mr. Callahan, for a while everything was fine, until the underground drug culture began

(Continued on page 95)





*mike henge*



# OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES

## BOB SHAW

*Illustrated by* **MICHAEL HINGE**

*"Slow glass" was just an accidental discovery, but one which was to transform not only the face of the world but its culture as well . . .*

### (Second of Two Parts)

#### SYNOPSIS

ALBAN GARROD invented slow glass—or "retardite" as it is officially known—by accident. His fledgling company, Garrod Transparencies, Inc., has developed a new kind of crystal, tougher than any known glass. It shouldn't have been transparent; it reflects energy at almost every wave-length in the spectrum. Only the visible wavelengths pass through it—NOT HEAT. It was patented as "Thermgard" and installed in a few production sports cars and in the final prototype U.S. supersonic transport.

In its first test flight with Thermgard windscreens, the SST crashes, plowing into the airstrip during the landing. And Garrod realizes what he has invented—and what his invention has done. In its earliest form, Thermgard slows the passage of light by one second!

It does not take Garrod long to realize what he really has—a "slow" glass which, if properly developed, can revolutionize the world.

But while his business fortunes are climbing, his marriage is crumbling. His wife, ESTHER, is the daughter of BOYD LIVINGSTON, whose money originally launched Garrod Transparencies, Inc. And somewhere along the line a marriage which promised fulfillment for them both has turned into a marriage of convenience, totally without passion or meaning. The turning point was the development of Thermgard into Retardite, at which point Garrod found his own financial footing and was no longer dependent upon his wife's father. Something dissolved out of the marriage then, and rather than make a futile attempt to recapture it, Garrod turns to his work and his growing business.

Retardite is transforming the world, in ways both good and not so good. Panels of the slow glass can be suspended over a roadway and, twelve hours out of phase, shine noontime sunlight at midnight. Panels are used as "view windows," stored first for a period up to several years at scenic overlooks, then



installed as windows in homes with less scenic views. And one panel has already witnessed a crime, playing it back years later in confirmation of the verdict already handed down by less slow-moving justice.

Slow glass also has been discovered to have many industrial uses and one which has increased the demand for privacy: a sliver of slow glass secreted in a room or on the person of a spy can be used to "play back" every scene to which it has been exposed.

On a trip to the Pentagon, Garrod meets a girl, an assistant to COLONEL MANNHEIM, who transfigures him with her beauty. Her name, he discovers, is JANE WASON. She so dominates his thoughts that he takes a special trip to Macon, Georgia, to visit Mannheim—ostensibly to check out military applications of Retardite, but in fact hoping to meet Jane again. He is only marginally successful; he encounters her for a few moments and they exchange inconsequential pleasantries. He feels a fool for the entire affair.

On his return home, Esther's needling prompts him to ask for a divorce, but she refuses. Once again, she senses, she is in a position to exercise power over him, and she wishes to savor it.

Meanwhile, Garrod and his research staff are coming to grips with a basic problem with the slow glass: how to release the stored images at will, rather than waiting for their eventual emission. The problem is that the images aren't stored inside the material as images. Variations in the arrangement of light and shade are translated into stress patterns which gradually make their way from one face of the "glass" to the other.

This means that, up to this point, no one has found a way to recover images before their timed release. Any attempt, no matter how subtle or insidious, to interfere with the glass's crystalline structure results in a near-instantaneous relieving of the stress patterns. There was not even a glimmer of released light. The material simply relaxed its grip on the past and became jet black.

Research has led to one degree of control over the emission—now it can be triggered to release all its stored light in one hell-bright flash.

Garrod's research is interrupted by the arrest of his father-in-law for an automobile accident which has resulted in homicide. In his attempt to solve the case—in which he is convinced of Livingston's innocence—Garrod discovers a "Scenedow," a slow-glass window, in a nearby house which overlooks the scene of the accident. He buys it and takes it to his private lab to see if he can stimulate a controlled emission of the scene involving his father-in-law.

While he is away from the lab, his wife uses her keys to unlock the lab and gain entrance to it. She calls him to tell him that the glass is behaving strangely—"It has got a lot brighter, and everything has speeded up in it," she tells him. Garrod tells her to leave the lab immediately, before it blows. She does, and the resultant flash knocks out the viewphone circuits for a few moments. When the picture returns, Esther has reentered the room and is marvelling at the way in which the sudden release of light has bleached the colors out of everything in the room. Garrod tries to warn her, but she is fascinated, and unaware that danger persists. But the



*place is full of experimental pieces of slow glass, some of which have delays of only a few moments. Even as he is warning her to cover her eyes and get out again, these pieces begin replaying the brilliant flash from the original panel—and Esther is blinded.*

*This, then, is to be the final tie that will bind their loveless marriage—Esther's martyrdom and Garrod's guilt. For now he can never divorce her, never leave her at all. And the news that his research staff has, through their regular program, finally achieved controlled release leaves the taste of ashes in his mouth. His work was redundant and its results have bound him to Esther.*

## CHAPTER 8

THE NEWS THAT ESTHER was to see again—but in a uniquely unnatural manner—came when Garrod was tied up with a series of appointments.

Earliest in the morning was a meeting with Charles Manston to discuss "broad matters of public relations policy." Manston was a tall, lean man with aquiline features and floppy black hair. He affected a very British style of dress, including dark blue cravats with white spots, and spoke with what Garrod thought of as a mid-Atlantic accent; but he had been a top-flight journalist and now was a perceptive and efficient PR man.

"I've been watching it happen for the past year or more," Manston said, puffing a gold-tipped cigarette into life. "The whole tide of public opinion is turning against our products."

Garrod fingered the stacks of Press cuttings and broadcast transcripts Manston had set on his desk. "Aren't you over-selling me on this one? Is there really such an animal as a tide of public opinion?"

"Believe me, Alban, the tide is very real and very powerful. If it's going the way you want it—great; if it's running against you—you're in trouble." Manston handed over a sheet of paper. "This is an analysis of our image acceptance as revealed by these cuttings. Almost sixty percent of the stories are openly unfavourable towards Retardite and related products, and another twelve percent have hostile connotations.

"That, Alban, is what is known in the trade as a bad Press."

Garrod looked at the tabulated figures, but Manston's habit of addressing him by his full Christian name had reminded him of Esther and the message he had received from Eric Hubert. The operation had been successful, and now Esther was to see again—if one accepted the surgeon's startling proposal as a means of "seeing" . . .

"Just look at the breakdown," Manston was saying. "Look how many items deal with strikes and other industrial actions caused by unions objecting to slow glass monitors being installed in plants. Look at all these stories about civil rights associations fighting the Government's decision that all road vehicles must carry slow glass telltales. And there's the new Privacy League—it's getting stronger every . . ."

"What do you propose to do about it?" Garrod said.



"We'll have to spend money. I can get the agency to draw up a PR campaign, but it's bound to cost at least a million."

The meeting lasted a further twenty minutes while Manston went on to outline his preliminary ideas on how the campaign ought to be laid out. Garrod, who had been only half-listening, gave his approval and watched Manston hurry away filled with enthusiasm and gratitude. He had a feeling that if the Press clippings had been totally in favour of Retardite the public relations man would still have urged him to invest a million, to ride the crest of the wave. A million now meant less to him now than a single dollar had done in his childhood in Barlow, Oregon, yet he had never quite managed to break the conditioning imposed by years of his uncle's pennypinching. Each time he wrote a large check or authorized heavy capital expenditure he saw his uncle turning gray with apprehension.

His next meeting was with Schickert, head of the Liquid Light Paints Division. Its basic product was a thixotropic emulsion of clear resin and powder fine slow glass beads with mixed delay periods ranging from hours to days. The paint's main application was architectural—buildings coated with it shone with a soft radiance at night—but there had been an unprecedented demand for the Retardite particles from other paint manufacturers. Schickert wanted authorization for a new plant which would increase output by a thousand tons a week. Again, Garrod allowed himself to be sold the proposal while his thoughts were elsewhere. Finally, he looked at his watch, saw with

relief that he was due to leave for Los Angeles in less than an hour, and made his escape from the office.

THERE'S A LITTLE discomfort at this stage," Eric Hubert said, "but Mrs. Garrod is seeing again."

"Already!" Garrod had difficulty matching the words to the kaleidoscope of his feelings. "I . . . I'm grateful."

Hubert gently fingered the vee-shaped artificial hairline which made him look like a pink plastic Mephistopheles. "The operation itself was quite simple—once we had sealed the anterior chamber with a skin of inert plastic jelly. That made it possible for us to remove the lens capsules and form small permanent slits in the corneas without losing the . . . I'm sorry—do you find this distressing?"

"It's all right."

"One of the drawbacks of being an eye surgeon is that you can't do much boasting about your work. The eye is a surprisingly tough organ, yet most people—especially men—can't bear to hear details of even the simplest operation. People *are* their eyes, you know. It's a kind of instinctive recognition of the fact that the retina is an extension of the brain, and therefore . . ."

"May I see my wife now?"

"Of course." Hubert made no attempt to get up from his chair. He began rearranging small piles of paperwork. "Before we go to Mrs. Garrod's room I want to make sure you know what's required of you."

"I don't understand." Garrod began to feel uneasy.

"I tried to convince Mrs. Garrod that it would be much better if a trained



ophthalmic nurse called to see her every day, but she wouldn't hear of it." Hubert gave Garrod a level, appraising stare. "She wants you to change her disks every morning."

"Oh!" Garrod felt his abdomen contract in revulsion, the attempt of his genitals to steal back into the body's protective cavities. "What does that involve exactly?"

"Nothing you can't handle," Hubert said kindly, and Garrod suddenly despised himself for having allowed his opinion of the surgeon to be influenced by the man's rather ludicrous appearance. "These are the disks."

He opened a flat case and exposed a number of small glass objects arranged in pairs. They were disks of less than a centimetre in diameter, with up-curving glass tails attached, like miniature translucent frying pans. Some of the disks were jet black, others glowed with colour and light.

Hubert smiled briefly. "I don't need to tell *you* what kind of material this is. These Retardite disks have different delay periods—one, two or three days. One day is the shortest period because I don't recommend opening the slits in the corneas any more frequently than once every twenty-four hours.

"To change them you will have to spray your wife's eyes with a combined immobilizer and anaesthetic, grip the old disks firmly by the extensions, slide them out, slide in the new disks, and squeeze a little sealant gel over the slits. It might sound like a major undertaking, but we'll put you through the routine a few times before your wife leaves the clinic. After a while you'll think nothing of it."

Garrod nodded slowly. "And, as far

as my wife is concerned, she'll have real vision again?"

"That's it—except, of course, that everything she sees will be one, two or three days late, depending on which disk she's using."

"I wonder how it'll compare with having normal eyes."

"The important thing, Mr. Garrod," Hubert said firmly, "is how it compares with having no eyes at all."

"I'm sorry—I must have sounded as though I don't appreciate what you've done, and that isn't the case. How is Esther reacting?"

"Beautifully. She tells me she used to watch a lot of television, and now she can do that again."

Garrod frowned. "How about the sound?"

"That can be recorded and played back in synch with what she's seeing." Hubert's voice became enthusiastic. "This operation will help a lot of people—perhaps someday we'll have State-sponsored television stations broadcasting sound on a separate wavelength exactly twenty-four hours later than their visual transmissions. That way, an ordinary tri-di set with only slight modification to the audio circuits . . ."

Garrod's attention wandered as he began to accept the fact that his wife could see again. Esther had been blind for almost a year, during which time they had not spent one evening apart and had gone out on perhaps only six occasions. It seemed to Garrod that he had endured eons in the brown dimness of the library, describing the events on endless television shows.

"*That's an interesting voice,*" Esther would say. "*Does the owner match it?*"



At other times she would take the lead and give long visualizations of the owners of voices, then ask him to confirm that she had been right. But, almost invariably, she was wrong—even in cases where Garrod suspected she could have described the person from memory—and greeted his corrections with a taut, wistful smile which told him he was forgiven for blinding her, and being forgiven was even deeper in thrall. Or at other times she would say the most forgiving, most smothering words of all, the ones Garrod dreaded to hear, delivered with a radiant countenance:

*"I'm sure the scenery I'm creating for this play is much better than what the viewers have to watch."*

Now, however, Esther could supply her own images, the light for her own eyes, and perhaps he would be able to breathe again.

"We'll go along and visit Mrs. Garrod now if you like," Hubert said.

Garrod nodded and followed the surgeon to the private suite. Esther was sitting up in bed in a bright room filled with prisms of sunlight slanting from the windows. She was wearing heavy, side-shielded glasses and, judging by the continuing rapt expression on her face, had not heard them enter the room. Garrod crossed to the bed and, deciding he had better get used to the results of the bizarre surgery, looked into his wife's face. Flawless blue eyes blinked at him through the lenses of her glasses. The eyes of a stranger. He took an involuntary step backwards, then noticed that the eyes had not responded to his presence.

"I should have told you," Hubert whispered. "Mrs. Garrod decided against dark glasses. Those are Retardite lenses programmed with another person's eyes."

"Where did you get them?"

"They're available commercially. Girls with pretty eyes can earn extra cash by wearing Retardite lenses all day. Some women who haven't got eye complaints wear them for cosmetic reasons—by using a fine grating of Retardite you can make spectacles through which a person can see normally, but anybody looking at them sees the programmed eyes. Surely you've seen them before?"

"No, I hadn't—I've been out of circulation lately." Garrod spoke loudly to attract Esther's attention.

"Alban," she said immediately, and held out her hands to him. Garrod gripped his wife's warm dry fingers and kissed her lightly on the lips, and all the while the stranger's blue eyes gazed tolerantly through Esther's glasses.

He lowered his gaze. "How do you feel?"

"Wonderful! I can see again, Alban."

"Is it just like . . . before?"

"Better than before—I've just discovered I was always a little short-sighted. Right now I'm looking out over the ocean at Piedras Blancas Point, I think it is, and I can see for miles. I'd forgotten how many shades of blue and green there are in the sea . . ." Esther's voice faded away and her lips parted with pleasure.

Garrod felt the beginnings of hope. "I'm glad, Esther. I'll send your disks anywhere in the world you want to see.



You'll be able to take in Broadway plays, pleasure trips . . ."

Esther laughed. "But that would be like being away from you."

"You won't really be away. And I'll always be around."

"No, darling. I don't want to waste this gift by spending the rest of my life watching travelogs." Esther's fingers closed over his. "I want to do simple personal things. Things that concern us—like going for walks together in our own gardens."

"That's a nice idea, honey, but you wouldn't be able to *see* the garden."

"Yes, I would—provided we went for our walk at the same time every day, and always along the same paths."

A cool breeze seemed to blow over Garrod's forehead. "That means living in yesterday. You'd be walking in a garden one day but seeing it as it was the day before . . ."

"Won't it be wonderful?" Esther raised his hand to her mouth and kissed his knuckles. Her breath was warm on the back of his hand. "You'll wear a pair of disks for me, won't you, Alban? I want you to wear them all the time, everywhere you go. That way we'll always be together."

Garrod tried to withdraw his hand, but Esther clung to it.

"Tell me you'll do it, Alban." Her words were glass rods snapping. "Tell me you'll share your life with me."

"Don't worry about it," Garrod said. "I'll do whatever you want."

He raised his eyes from her frantically clawing hands and looked into her face. The stranger's eyes regarded him with a calm, vacant contentment.

**T**HE MURDER of Senator Jerry Westcott took place at 2:33 a.m. on a lonely road several miles north of Bingham, Maine.

His death was timed with precision because the weapon used was a laser cannon so powerful that it vaporized most of the car in which the Senator had been travelling. The murderer had chosen a spot where the road dipped abruptly through a hollow and thus had prevented the flash from being seen by anybody in the surrounding area, but it had been picked up by a Sky-eye II military observation satellite and the information telemetered to an underground tracking station. From there it went to the Pentagon and eventually, but still within the hour, came into the hands of the civil authorities.

A laser cannon, while effective, is anything but discreet and it was deduced that it had been employed because it was certain to destroy the Retardite telltales on the car and any other pieces of slow glass which may have been in the vehicle. The criminal community had been quick to learn that it was inadvisable to be "seen" by a piece of slow glass even at night, even at a distance, because of the special optical techniques which could be employed for interrogating the glass. And now that Retardite could be played back at will, without having to wait for its nominal delay period to elapse, it was even more imperative to take precautions against it.

In this instance, the laser did effec-



tively destroy all incriminating Retardite on the vehicle. It also charred the Senator's body far beyond recognition and, had it not failed to incinerate the contents of his fireproof briefcase, the identity of the dead man might not have been ascertained for some days.

As it was, the expanding ripple of information which had begun with a minute surge of photons in an orbiting camera spread outwards through the broadcasting networks and, within a matter of hours, had assumed the proportions of a tidal wave.

No matter how much it might have been predicted, no matter how many times it had occurred in the past, the assassination of a man who in less than a year would probably have been President of the United States was still big news.

## CHAPTER 10

IT WAS A SUNNY EVENING, but they walked in the gardens while Esther admired yesterday's rain.

"It's really wonderful, Alban." She pulled on his arm, forcing him to pause near a clump of deep-hued shrubs. He remembered they had halted at the same place on the previous day, and Esther liked to create an illusion of being normally sighted by matching today's bodily movements with yesterday's changing viewpoints.

"I can see the rain falling all around me," she continued, "but all I can feel is warm sunlight. The sun is my umbrella."

Garrod was almost certain Esther was trying to be profound or poetic,

so he squeezed her hand encouragingly, while making sure his face did not come within range of the two black disks which glinted on her lapel. He had discovered that a look of impatience or anger recorded by Esther's vicarious eyes, but not passed to her brain until twenty-four hours later, was a bigger strain on the relationship than a spontaneous mutual clash.

"I think we should go in now," he said. "Dinner is almost ready."

"In a moment. We walked to the pool yesterday so that I could see the rain falling on it."

"All right." Garrod walked with his wife to the edge of the long pool. She stood at its turquoise-tiled rim for a minute, and once leaned over above their reflections. Looking downwards at the water's smooth surface, Garrod was able to see the same stranger's enormous blue eyes behind Esther's glasses. Close to them, due to the foreshortening of her reflection, were the two night-black specks which were her real windows on the world, but which would not yield these images until the same time the following day. His own reflection shivered and shrank beside hers, anonymous dark pits for eyes, like a detail from an oil painting magnified to a size which revealed all its imperfections. *That's the real me down there*, the fugue-like thought came. *And I'm the real reflection*. He breathed deeply, but the air seemed not to reach his lungs. His heart swelled like a pillow, filling his chest with its frustrated fluffy poundings, strangling him.

"We're walking now," Esther commanded. "Come along."

They moved off towards the ivy-



covered house for the evening meal. As usual, Esther had a sea-food salad—she preferred a repetitious diet to eating varied foods whose tastes were not in accordance with yesterday's images. Garrod ate lightly from his own servings, then stood up. Esther unclipped the disks from her lapel and handed them to him. He took the plastic mount from her and went through to his laboratory at the rear of the house to prepare the evening's television viewing.

In a corner of the laboratory he had set up one of the old-style large-screen television sets, a sound recorder and an automatic control which switched channels according to Esther's preselected viewing requirements. Facing the set was a stand on which he placed his wife's eye disks to absorb that evening's shows. Also on the stand was what looked like an ordinary pair of glasses but which had disks of twenty-four hour slow glass in place of conventional lenses. These were his.

Garrod replaced the glasses with a similar pair, switched on the television set, the sound recorder and the control unit. He took a tape cassette and his charged glasses into the library, where Esther was already waiting in her wing-back chair. When he put the glasses on he found himself watching a newscast which had gone out exactly twenty-four hours earlier. He plugged the cassette into a playback machine, worked for a moment to synchronize the recorded sound, and sat down beside his wife. Another evening at home had begun.

Normally Garrod was able to take in day-old newscasts with complete

indifference, but with that morning's announcement of Senator Wescott's assassination fresh in his mind the experience was nerve-racking. Yesterday was as distant and lost and futile as the Punic Wars. And yesterday was the place where his wife was making him live. He sat with clenched hands and thought of the one and only time, a month earlier, when he had tried to break free. Esther had snatched the Retardite disks out of her own eyes, screaming with pain, and endured blindness for days afterwards, refusing to see again until he promised to restore their previous degree of "togetherness." Again the sense of asphyxiation came on him and he fought it with deep, controlled breathing.

Perhaps an hour had passed when McGill, the major domo, quietly entered the library and told Garrod there was a priority call from Augusta, Maine.

Garrod glanced at his wife's impassive face. "You know I don't accept business calls while at home. Get Mr. Fuente to deal with it."

"Mr. Fuente has already been on another channel, Mr. Garrod. He said it was he who gave this caller your private number and that it's imperative for you to take the call personally." McGill was whispering out of deference to Esther, but there was a stubborn expression on his jowled face.

"In that case . . ." Garrod got to his feet, pleased at the unexpected break in the stultifying routine, set his glasses down and went to the ground-floor room he used as an office. In the view-phone he saw an expensively-dressed, powerfully-built black man who had fierce eyes and a spectacular streak of



white in his hair.

"Mr. Garrod," the caller said. "I am Miller J. Pobjoy, chief executive of the State of Maine police commission."

Garrod had a feeling he had heard the name already that day, but was unable to place it. "What can I do for you?"

"A great deal, I think. My department is investigating the murder of Senator Wescott, and I'm asking for your assistance."

"In a murder investigation! I don't see how I can help."

Pobjoy smiled, showing very white, slightly uneven teeth. "Come now, Mr. Garrod—next to Sherlock Holmes you're the most famous amateur detective I can think of."

"Strictly an amateur, Mr. Pobjoy. The business about my father-in-law was meant to be a private matter."

"I appreciate that—I should explain that I was only joking about the gumshoeing. The reason I've called is . . . I presume this is a secure channel?"

Garrod nodded. "It is. I have a type 183 security cloak here too, if you want."

"Not necessary. We've recovered the remains of the Retardite telltales from the Senator's car and we're appointing a panel of experts whose job it will be to see if they can contain any information about the killer or killers."

"Remains?" Garrod felt his interest quicken. "What sort of remains? I understood from the radio broadcasts that the whole vehicle was puddled."

"Well, that's just the point—we aren't too sure just what we've got. We have some chunks of drippy-looking metal here, and we think one of them might

have a Retardite telltale inside it. The best technical advice we've got so far is that it would be risky to slice into the metal in case the stresses damaged the glass."

"It won't make any difference," Garrod said emphatically. "If the telltale has been in contact with white-hot metal all its interior stress patterns will have been relieved. The information is gone."

"We don't know how hot the metal was, or even if it was truly molten at the time these chunks were formed. There were explosive forces at work on it."

"I still say the information's gone."

"But can you, as a scientist—a scientist who hasn't even seen what we've got—make a positive statement to that effect?" Pobjoy leaned forward, intent.

"Of course not."

"Then will you agree to look at the material?"

Garrod sighed. "All right—have it sent to my Portston laboratories."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Garrod, but you would have to come here. This is being handled within the state of Maine."

"I'm sorry, too. I don't see how I could spend that much time and . . ."

"There's a lot at stake, Mr. Garrod. Assassins have robbed this country of too much already."

Garrod thought of Jerry Wescott's burning commitment to social reform, his Darrow-like hatred of the kind of injustice which is born of inequality of opportunity. Anger at the Senator's premature death had been an undercurrent in his thoughts all day, but suddenly it was overlaid by an entirely new consideration. He thought: *I would*



*have to go without Esther.*

"I'll try to help," he said aloud. "Tell me where to meet you."

When they had finished speaking and the screen had gone dead, he stood for a moment staring into its spurious gray infinities. His first reaction was one of childish elation, but the very intensity of the emotion inspired a sobering query. *Why have I allowed Esther to nail me down?*

It came to him that the most escape-proof gaol of all was one in which the door was always unlocked—provided the prisoner had not the guts to push it open and walk out. His responsibility for her blindness was hinged on the fact that he had forgotten there was a spare key to his laboratory, but if one adult warns another in clear terms . . .

"So you're going to Augusta," Esther said from behind him.

He turned to face her. "I couldn't very well refuse."

"I know, darling. I heard what Mr. Pobjoy said."

Garrod was surprised at the calmness of his wife's voice. "You don't mind?"

"Not as long as you take me with you."

"That's out of the question," he said stiffly. "I'm going to be working and travelling all the . . ."

"I realise I'd be in the way—if I went in person." Esther smiled and held out her hand.

"But what other . . . ?" Garrod's voice trailed away as he saw that Esther was offering him one of the flat cases containing her spare sets of eyes.

He would not be alone, after all.

## CHAPTER 11

GARROD'S PLANE took off early in the morning, twisting and skidding in the clear but turbulent air over Portston, and climbed a way towards the East.

"Have to fly low this morning," Lou Nash reminded him over the intercom. "We're still barred from the commercial lanes."

"You've mentioned that before now, Lou," Garrod said comfortably, recalling the penalty the air traffic tribunal had meted out for his crazy dash to Macon an eternity ago. "Don't worry about it."

"It's costing you money, this flying low and slow."

"I said, don't worry about it." Garrod smiled, aware that Nash's concern was not with the economics of the flight, but with the fact that he was prevented from giving the plush-lined projectile its head. He settled back in his chair and watched the miniaturized world drift by below. After a moment he noticed that Esther's eye disks, in the small plastic holder in his lapel, were below the level of the window. He unclipped the device which incorporated a sound recorder and set it on the lower rim of the window, with the watchful black circles facing outwards. *Enjoy the view*, he thought.

"There's another one!" Nash's voice rapped excitedly from the concealed speakers.

"Another what?" Garrod looked downwards at a panorama of tan-colored hills flecked with scrub and traversed by a single highway. He saw nothing unusual.



"Crop-spraying job at about two thousand feet."

Garrod's unpactised eye still had not found anything resembling another aircraft. "But there aren't any crops out here."

"That's what's funny about it. I've seen three of those Joes in the last month, though."

The plane banked to the right, increasing the downwards view on that side, and suddenly Garrod found a tiny gleaming crucifix far below, moving across their line of flight and trailing a white feather of what appeared to be smoke. As he watched, the feather abruptly vanished.

"He's just spotted us," Nash said. "They always quit spraying when they see you."

"Two thousand feet is too high for crop-spraying, isn't it? What's the normal height?"

"Practically on the deck—that's something else that's queer."

"Somebody must be testing spraying equipment, that's all."

"But . . ."

"Lou," Garrod said severely, "there are too many automatic controls on this airplane—and that means you're sitting up there all alone with nothing to occupy your mind. Would you please either fly this thing yourself or do a crossword?"

Nash muttered semi-audibly and lapsed into a silence which lasted for the rest of the flight. Garrod, who had curtailed his night's sleep in preparing for the trip, dozed, drank coffee, and dozed again until the viewphone built into the forward bulkhead chimed for his attention. He accepted the call and

found himself looking at the hawkish features of Manston, his public relations manager.

"Good morning, Alban," Manston said in his neutral accent. "See any newscasts or papers this morning?"

"No, I hadn't time."

"You're back in the headlines again."

Garrod sat upright. "In what way?"

"According to all the splash stories I've seen you're on your way to Augusta full of confidence that you can pinpoint Senator Wescott's murderer by examining the remains of his car."

"What?"

"There are all kinds of hints that you have a new technique for getting images out of fragmented or fused slow glass."

"But that's crazy! I told Pobjoy there was no . . ." Garrod took a steadying breath. "Charles, did you make any statements about this to the Press last night?"

Manston adjusted blue spotted cravat and looked pained. "Please!"

"Then it must have been Pobjoy."

"Do you want me to issue a counter-statement of any kind?"

Garrod shook his head. "No—let it ride. I'll sort it out with Pobjoy when I see him. Thanks for calling, Charles."

Garrod terminated the call. He sat back in his chair and tried to drift off to sleep again but a thread of annoyance was wavering in his thoughts, like a bright serpent squirming across the surface of a pool. The past year with Esther had made him very sensitive to some things, and at this moment he had a strong sense of being manipulated, of being used by another person.



Pobjoy's statements to the Press were not merely ill-considered, they were blatantly contrary to the entire gist of the single conversation he had had with Garrod. He had not given the impression of being a man who would act without a well thought out motive, but what had he hoped to gain?

It was a clear brassy noon when Garrod's aircraft dropped onto the runway at an airport close to Augusta. As it rolled to a halt in the private aircraft arrivals bay Garrod looked through the ports and saw the now-familiar grouping of reporters and cameramen. Some of the latter were holding Retardite panels, but the others—reflecting the struggles that were taking place between branches of the photo-journalists' union—were carrying conventional photographic equipment. At the last moment Garrod remembered to lift Esther's disks from the window and clip them to his lapel. When he stepped out of his aircraft the newsmen surged towards the tarmac, but were held back by a strong contingent of uniformed police. The tall, powerful figure of Miller Pobjoy came into view wearing a suit of midnight blue silk.

"Sorry about the crowd," he said easily, shaking Garrod's hand. "We'll get you out of here in no time." He gave a hand signal, a limousine appeared beside the aircraft, and in a matter of seconds Garrod was inside it and being driven towards the airport gates. "I guess you're used to the celebrity treatment by this time?"

"I'm not that much of a celebrity," Garrod replied quickly. "What was the idea of feeding all that bull to the Press

last night?"

"Bull, Mr. Garrod?" Pobjoy looked puzzled.

"Yeah—the stuff about my being confident of pinpointing the killer with new Retardite interrogation techniques."

Pobjoy's brow was restored to the smoothness and sheen of a new chestnut. "Oh, *that*! Somebody in our publicity department got a little overenthusiastic, I guess. You know how it is."

"As a matter of fact, I don't. My publicity manager would sack any member of his staff who pulled one like that. Then I would sack him for having allowed it to happen."

Pobjoy shrugged. "Somebody got carried away, lost his head, that's all. It's a big embarrassment to the state that Wescott got himself murdered—the only reason it happened in Maine was that the Senator came up here regularly for the fishing and hunting—so everybody's very anxious to show willing."

Garrod found the black man's attitude strangely unsatisfactory, but he decided to let the matter slide. On the ride into downtown Augusta he learned that the other members of the expert panel were an FBI man called Gilchrist and a military research chief who had temporarily been detached from the Army for the purpose. The latter turned out to be Colonel John Mannheim, one of the very few men in the military establishment with whom Garrod was on comfortable drinking terms. Mannheim was also—and the thought caused Garrod's heart to lurch slightly—the immediate boss of the Korean-looking silver-lipped girl who, without raising a finger, had destroyed



Garrod's sanity for a day. He opened his mouth to ask if the colonel had brought any of his secretarial staff with him, then remembered the vision and sound recorder on his lapel. His hand rose instinctively to the smooth plastic.

"That's an unusual gadget you've got there," Pobjoy smiled. "Is it a camera?"

"Sort of. Where are we going now?"

"To your hotel."

"Oh. I thought we'd have gone straight to police headquarters."

"Have to get you freshened up and fed first," Pobjoy smiled again. "A man can't give of his best on an empty stomach, can he?"

Garrod shook his head uncertainly as the feeling of being manipulated returned. "Have you arranged for laboratory and workshop facilities?"

"All laid on, Mr. Garrod. After you meet the other members of the panel and have lunch we're all driving up to Bingham so you can see the scene of the murder for yourself."

"What good will that do?"

"It's hard to say how much good it ever does—but it's the natural starting point for all homicide investigations." Pobjoy began scanning the street through which they were passing. "It helps, you know, to get the best possible picture of the actual crime. The relative positions and angles . . . Here's the hotel now—what do you say to a drink before lunch?"

Another group of reporters were waiting on the sidewalk outside the hotel, and again they were being held in check by a larger force of police. Pobjoy waved to the newsmen in a friendly manner as he urged Garrod quickly through into the foyer.

"You don't need to register," Pobjoy said. "I've taken care of all the details and your baggage is right behind us."

They crossed an area of lush, expensive carpet, rode up three floors in the elevator, and walked a short distance to a large, pale green, sunny room which appeared as though it might have been used for Rotary Club meetings. On this occasion a single table was laid with about twenty places. A bar had been set up in a corner and a number of men who looked like politicians and police executives were standing around in small groups. Garrod at once picked out John Mannheim, looking slightly uncomfortable in a business suit.

Pobjoy fetched Garrod a vodka tonic from the bar and took him around the assembly performing introductions. The only name which stuck with Garrod was that of Horace Gilchrist, the FBI forensic expert, who was a sand-colored man with cropped, forward-growing hair and the intent expression of someone whose hearing is poor but is determined not to miss a word. Garrod was on his second extra-strong drink and an air of unreality was stealing over him by the time he reached Mannheim.

He drew the colonel aside. "What's going on here, John? I feel like I'm taking part in a charade."

"But that's exactly what it is, Al."

"What do you mean?"

An amused expression appeared on Mannheim's ruddy fisherman's face. "Nothing."

"You meant something."

"Al, you know as well as I do that murders aren't solved at this level . . ."



"Lunch is served, gentlemen," Pobjoy called, ringing his glass loudly with a spoon. "Please be seated."

At the long table Garrod found himself directly opposite John Mannheim, though just too far away for discreet conversation. He kept trying to catch Mannheim's eye but the colonel was drinking quickly and talking to the men on each side of him. During the meal Garrod answered occasional questions from his own neighbours and did his best to disguise his impatience with the proceedings. He was moodily stirring his coffee when he became aware that a woman had entered the room and was leaning over Mannheim's shoulder, whispering to him. Garrod glanced up and felt his throat go dry as he recognized her black hair and silver-painted lips. It was Jane Wason.

At that instant she raised her eyes and they locked into Garrod's with a directness which seemed to drain the strength from his body. The businesslike set of the beautiful face appeared to soften momentarily, then she was hurrying away from the table. Garrod stared after her, filled with the elated certainty that he had shaken Jane Wason as she had shaken him.

A full minute had passed before he remembered Esther's eyes clipped to his lapel, and again his hand rose of its own accord to cover the sentient glassy disks.

IN THE AFTERNOON Garrod freshened up, changed his clothes and joined the other men—Mannheim, Gilchrist and Pobjoy—who were being driven to Bingham to examine the scene of the

crime. There was a sleepy, well-fed atmosphere in the limousine and they spoke very little as it worked its way into the north-bound traffic flow. Garrod kept thinking about Jane Wason, seeing her face shimmering in his vision like a bright after-image, and they had travelled perhaps three miles before he absorbed the fact that they kept passing work crews who were replacing slow glass lighting panels above the road.

"What's going on?" He tapped Pobjoy's broad knee and nodded at one of the maintenance trucks.

"Oh, that!" Pobjoy grinned. "We've got a really active chapter of the Privacy League here in Augusta. Some nights they go out in their cars with the sunroofs open and shoot up the lighting panels with duck guns."

"But that would only blank out the glass for a few hours until the light came through again."

Pobjoy shook his head. "As soon as the material is holed or cracked it's considered unsafe structurally and has to be replaced. City ordinance."

"It must be costing the city a fortune."

"Not only this city—it's the new national sport, man. And I know I don't need to tell *you* that people don't buy Scenedows much any more."

"As a matter of fact," Garrod said guiltily, "I've been neglecting the business for the last year, so I'm out of touch with the sales position."

"I daresay it'll get in touch with you soon enough. Hotheads in the League throw bricks through Scenedows. The more subtle types blank them out with ticklers and the proud home-owners



are left with black windows."

"What sort of person do you find in this Privacy League?"

"That's just it—you couldn't say that any special group or subdivision supports the League. We pick up college professors, clerks, cab-drivers, school kids . . . right across the board."

Garrod leaned back in the deep upholstery and stared thoughtfully into the distance. He was learning things on his excursion into the world that still existed and struggled and changed outside his library windows. Manston had been right when he said the tide of public opinion was turning against Retardite, but it appeared that even he was underestimating the speed and growing power of the reaction.

"Personally, I don't quite understand the public's antipathy," he said. "How do you feel about it?"

"Personally," Pobjoy replied, "I would say it's a fairly predictable reaction."

"But what about the drop in crime figures? And the big jump in successful detections and prosecutions? Don't the public care about that?"

"They do." Pobjoy grinned with what could have been malice. "You see, it's the public who break all the laws."

"Nobody likes to be spied on," Gilchrist put in unexpectedly.

Garrod opened his mouth to say something, then he remembered that Esther was watching and listening from his lapel, and that he hated her for it. A silence descended over the four men and remained virtually unbroken while the vehicle made its effortless climb into mountain and lake country.

"If you begin to lose money with slow glass," Pobjoy said in a jovial voice at one point, "you could try that kind of investment, Al."

Garrod opened his eyes and looked out. They were passing the entrance to a vacation center, the curving fence of which bore a freshly-painted sign: "HONEYMOON HEIGHTS — 100 idyllic acres guaranteed free from slow glass, spyglass, glass eyes, etc." He closed his eyes again, and the thought entered his mind that where slow glass was concerned the natural order of things was reversed, the legend giving rise to the event. One of the first folk-stories to spring up after the introduction of Retardite was about a salesman who gave a newly-wed couple a Scenedow at a ridiculously low price, then called back a week later and replaced it with an even better one, free of charge. The classically simple-minded couple in the story, pleased at their good fortune, did not know that Retardite worked in both directions, nor that subsequently they were going over big at stag parties. Childish as the yarn was, it illustrated humanity's basic fear of being watched at those times when, for sound biological as well as social reasons, they wished to be apart from their fellows and unseen.

The limousine stopped for a time in Bingham, where the three members of the expert panel were introduced to representatives of the county police and then had coffee. It was late in the afternoon when they reached the scene of Wescott's assassination. A section of the road and nearby hillside had been roped off, but the ruined vehicle had been removed and there was little to



see apart from heat scars gouged deeply into the surface.

Garrod's conviction that the investigation was futile returned to him. He spent the best part of an hour tramping around the site, picking up odd droplets of metal under the watchful gaze of a group of reporters who were not allowed inside the roped enclosure. As he had expected, the entire exercise—including a little lecture from Pobjoy about the probable type and positioning of the laser cannon—was valueless. Garrod expressed his growing impatience with the proceedings by sitting on a low outcropping of rock and gazing into the sky. Far above him, in virtual silence, a small white aircraft of the type used in crop-spraying drifted across the blueness.

On the drive back to Augusta somebody switched on a radio and picked up a news broadcast, two items of which were of particular interest to Garrod. One was to the effect that the state attorney's office had announced substantial progress towards establishing the identity of Senator Wescott's killer; the other said that the postal workers' unions had taken their long-expected industrial action over the installation of Retardite monitors in the sorting centers, and therefore no mail was being handled.

Garrod looked squarely at Pobjoy. "What progress has been made?"

"I didn't say anything about progress," Pobjoy protested.

"That eager-beaver publicity man again?"

"I expect so. You know how it is."

Garrod snorted and was about to criticize the organization of some parts

of the attorney's office again when the personal implications of the newly announced postal strike came home to him. The arrangement he had with Esther was that he would send her a set of eye disks by the stratocourier service each night, which meant they would be in Portston every morning in time for her nurse to slip them under the corneas before breakfast. His anger at the degree of neurosis Esther had displayed in forcing the scheme on him made it all the more important that he make some overt effort towards an alternative arrangement. He took a communicator stick from his pocket, turned the slides to Lou Nash's code and pressed the call button.

Nash's voice was heard almost immediately. "Mr. Garrod?"

"Lou, there's a post office strike on, so I'm going to have to use you as a mailman while I'm in Augusta."

"That's all right, Mr. Garrod."

"It means flying to Portston every night and coming back in the mornings."

"No problem—except for the low-and-slow injunction. Portston Field won't stay open any later than midnight, which means I'll have to get out of Augusta by about 19:00 hours."

Garrod opened his mouth to insist on the airfield being held open, regardless of expense, but an uncharacteristic mood of slyness came over him. He arranged to meet Nash at six o'clock in the hotel, and sat back in his seat with a pleasurable sense of guilt. An evening on his own, off the hook, in a strange city. Esther would demand to know why he had not worn eye disks for the evening but he could



argue that her eyes for that day were absorbing the images of Nash's flight back to Portston, and there was no way she could cram an extra six hours of seeing into a twenty-four hour day. All he had to do now was decide what he would do with this bonus of time, *free* time. Garrod considered several possibilities, including the theater of a straight-forward mind-annihilating drunk, then realised he was deceiving himself—and if he was going to start cheating his wife it was important that he be honest with himself about it.

What he was going to do that evening was, if circumstances permitted, to do his best to bed down with John Mannheim's silver-lipped secretary.

GARROD PINNED the brooch-like disk-holder onto Lou Nash's lapel, smiled a farewell into the sentient black beads, and watched the pilot walk away across the hotel lobby. It seemed to him that Nash was walking differently, self-consciously, and he got a sudden insight into how his own marriage must look to an outsider. Nash had passed no comment when he learned what the disks were for, but he had been unable to conceal the mystification in his eyes. Why was it, the unspoken question had been, that a man who was in a position to have a beautiful new woman each week, each day, until all strength and desire were sucked out of him remained subject to Esther? Why indeed? Garrod had never thought much about it, usually considering himself a natural monogamist, but supposing the truth was that Esther—money-wise and value-seeking in all transactions—had

been clever enough to buy exactly the sort of man she required?

"There he is!" Mannheim's voice came from close behind. "Let's have a drink before dinner."

Garrod turned with the intention of refusing the invitation, then he saw that Mannheim was accompanied by Jane Wason. She was wearing a black evening dress so fine and sheer that her breasts seemed to have no more covering than a film of glossy paint and there was a soft triangular bulge of hair below the plump curve of her belly. Prismatic highlights flowed on her body like oil.

"A drink?" Garrod spoke absently, realising Jane was smiling at him with an oddly uncertain look. "Why not? I hadn't made any plans for dinner."

"You don't make plans for dinner—you just relax and enjoy it. You've got to eat with us. Isn't that right, Jane?"

"We can't force Mr. Garrod to have dinner with us if he doesn't want to."

"But I do!" Garrod gave himself a mental shake and began grabbing the custom-built opportunity. "In fact, I was about to contact you two and ask you to eat with me."

"The two of us?" Mannheim slid his arm around his secretary's waist and drew her to him. "I wasn't even sure you liked me, Al."

"I'm crazy about you, John." Garrod smiled at the older man, but as he saw the easy familiarity with which Jane leaned against him he discovered he wished desperately for Mannheim to have a heart attack and collapse on the spot. "How about that drink?"

They went into the dim cave of one of the hotel bars and at Mannheim's



insistence ordered outsize Zombie Christophes. Garrod sipped his drink, not appreciating its burnt candy flavour, and wondered about the relationship between Mannheim and Jane. She was at least twenty years the younger, but she might find his zesty unpretentiousness attractive, and he had had all the time and opportunity in the world to make his mark. And yet, Garrod noticed—or was it his imagination?—that Jane was sitting a little closer to him than to Mannheim. The faint light in the bar allowed Garrod's faulty eye to function practically as well as the other and he was able to see her with what was, for him, a preternatural three-dimensional clarity. She looked impossibly beautiful, like a gilded Hindu goddess. Each time she smiled Garrod's newfound hatred for Mannheim caused a cold tightness in his stomach. They stayed in the hotel for dinner, during which Garrod tried to steer a course between the overly direct approach he had tried the first time they had spoken and the danger of not challenging Mannheim's apparent claim. The meal ended too quickly for him.

"I enjoyed that," Mannheim said, prodding ruefully at his thickening waist. "The least you can do now is take care of the bill."

Garrod, who had intended paying for the dinner anyway, felt his resentment flare up almost uncontrollably, then he noticed that Mannheim had got to his feet with every appearance of a man about to leave in a hurry. Jane, on the other hand, gave no sign of wanting to move.

"You aren't leaving?" Garrod fought

to mask his joy.

"I'm afraid I am. There's a stack of paperwork to take care of up in my room."

"That's too bad."

Mannheim shrugged. "The thing worrying me is that I'm starting to *like* sitting inside my security cloak. A womb with no view. That just has to be a bad sign."

"You're giving away your age," Jane said with a smile. "Freud is completely *passé*, you know."

"That puts him level with me." Mannheim bade her goodnight, gave Garrod a comradely sideways flick of the head, and made his way out of the restaurant.

Garrod gazed after him with affection. "Too bad he had to leave."

"That's the second time you've said that."

"Overdoing it, huh?"

"A little. You're making me feel like one of the boys."

"All right," Garrod said. "I was sitting here wondering how I could arrange for John to receive a fake call to go to Washington. I would have tried it, too, only I wasn't sure just how things were . . ."

"With John and me?" Jane gave a low laugh.

"Well—he had his arm around you, and . . ."

"How beautifully Victorian!" Her face became serious. "You've absolutely no technique with girls, have you, Al?"

"I've never needed one."

"Because you're rich and good-looking they just fall into your lap."

"I didn't mean that," he said a little



desperately. "It's just . . ."

"I know what you mean, and I'm flattered." Jane put her hand on his, the contact sending a thrill along his arm. "You are married, aren't you?"

"I . . . am." Garrod broke through a mental barrier. "For the time being, that is."

She looked directly into his eyes for a long moment, then her jaw dropped. "One of your pupils is shaped like a . . ."

"A keyhole," he said. "I do know about it. I had an operation on that eye when I was a kid."

"But you don't need to wear dark glasses just for that. It looks a bit unusual, but you would hardly notice it."

Garrod smiled as he realised the goddess had her own set of human frailties. "I don't wear tinted glasses for cosmetic reasons. The eye admits twice as much light as it should, and when I'm outside in bright daylight it hurts."

"Oh. I'm sorry."

"It's nothing. What would you like to do now?"

"Could we go for a drive? I hate being cooped up in cities too long."

Garrod nodded. He signed the bill and, while Jane was away fetching her wrap, arranged for a rental car to be brought to the hotel entrance. Ten minutes later they were heading towards the southern outskirts of the city, and in a further thirty were in the country.

"You seem to know where you're going," Jane said.

"I don't. All I know is this is the opposite direction to the way I went this morning."

"I see." He was aware of Jane looking at him. "You aren't happy with this so-called investigation, are you?"

"No."

"I thought not—you're too honest."

"Honest? What do you mean, Jane?"

There was a protracted silence. "Nothing."

"I think you meant something. Pobjoy's been acting strangely and earlier today John said something about a charade. What is it, Jane?"

"I told you—nothing."

Garrod swung off the highway onto a sideroad, braked sharply and cut the engine. "I want to know, Jane," he said. "You've either said too much or too little."

She looked away from him. "You'll probably be able to go back home tomorrow."

"Why?"

"The only reason Miller Pobjoy asked you to come here was so that he could use your name."

"Sorry—I don't get it."

"The police know who killed Senator Wescott. They've known it from the start."

"If that's true they would have picked the killer up."

"It is true." Jane turned to him, her face an undine-mask in the green light of the instrument panel. "I don't know how they know, but they do."

"It still doesn't make sense! Why did they send for me if . . . ?"

"It's all a cover-up, Al. Don't you see it yet? They know, but they don't want anybody to know *how* they know."

Garrod shook his head. "Too much."

"John told me you got pretty uptight



with Mr. Pobjoy over the stories his department released to the Press," Jane said insistently. "Why do you think they did that? Most people now believe you've developed a new kind of interrogation technique for slow glass. Even if you deny it the rumors will still be going the rounds."

"So?"

"So when they arrest the killer they won't need to make public how they knew his identity!" Jane lunged for the car's ignition key and now her voice was angry. "Why am I bothering?"

Garrod caught her arm. She resisted for a second, then they were kissing, drinking from each others mouths, breathing each others breath. Garrod tried, without much success, to think on two levels. If Jane's theory was correct—and as Mannheim's secretary she would have access to top secret files—it would explain several things which had been bothering him, important things . . . but she felt and tasted just the way he had imagined she would, and her breast firmed naturally and easily into his hand, pressing outwards through the fingers.

When they finally separated he said, "Do you remember the afternoon I saw you in Macon?"

She nodded.

"I flew from Washington just for that purpose, just hoping I would see you . . ."

"I know, Al," she murmured. "I kept telling myself I was conceited, and it was impossible, but I knew."

They kissed again. When he touched the satin-smooth skin of her knees they parted for an instant then closed hard, gripping his fingers.

And, when they coupled on the cool sheets, he felt the destructive tensions grow within him. The delay between the first moment in the car and this one had been too great.

"Relax," Jane whispered in the darkness. "Love me."

"I am relaxed," he said with a growing sense of panic. "I do love you."

And at that moment Jane, in her wisdom, saved him. One of her fingertips traced a line down his spine and as it reached the small of his back a diamond-bright plume of ecstasy geysered through his body. As she entered him ever so gently from the rear, he experienced a staccato, explosive climax which she shared and which annihilated all his repressions, all his fears.

*They can drop the Bomb now, he thought. It doesn't matter any more.*

A moment later, simultaneously, they both began to laugh, silently at first then with a childish helplessness. And in the hours which followed Garrod's renaissance was completed.

## CHAPTER 12

NEXT MORNING GARROD called his home, although he knew that—because of the time difference—Esther would still be asleep. He left her a short recorded message:

"Esther, I can no longer agree to wearing eye disks for you. When the set which reaches you this morning is expended, you will simply have to make some other arrangements—about



everything. I'm sorry, but that's the way it is."

Turning away from the viewplate he felt a powerful sense of relief that he had finally taken positive action. It was only when he was eating breakfast alone in his room that he began to wonder about the timing of his call. The positive way to look at it was that he had phoned immediately as he awoke because he had an unshakable resolve to break free and would tolerate no delay. But within his personality was another Garrod who, judging by past performance, would deliberately have chosen to place the call at a time when he would not be forced to confront Esther directly. The notion disturbed him. He took a shower with a vague hope of driving it away, and emerged feeling refreshed. There was an unaccustomed warmth inside him, a feeling of *easiness*, which seemed to nestle in his pelvis and radiate along his limbs.

*I've gone sane, he thought. It took a hell of a long time, but I finally experienced the madness which brings sanity.*

Unexpectedly, Jane had insisted that they separate and spend the last hours of the night in their own rooms. Now he felt a deep sense of wrongness that she had not been with him during breakfast and in the shower. He decided to call her as soon as he had finished dressing, but within a few seconds his own viewphone chimed. He strode to it eagerly and activated the screen.

The caller was Miller Pobjoy, his face as smooth and glossy as a newly-hatched chestnut. "Morning, Al. I hope you got a good night's sleep."

"An excellent night, thanks." Garrod refrained from mentioning sleep.

"Good! I want to tell you our program for the day . . ."

"First let me tell you mine," Garrod cut in. "In a few moments I'm going to call my public relations manager and instruct him to issue a statement to all media that the investigation you're conducting here is a pure sham, that you've no evidence from Wescott's car, and that I'm resigning from . . ."

"Hold on, man! This channel may not be secure."

"I hope it isn't. A good news leak is usually more effective than straight announcements."

"Don't take any action till I see you," Pobjoy said, frowning. "I'll be there in twenty minutes."

"Make it fifteen." Garrod broke the connection, lit a cigarette and smoked it slowly as he analysed his situation. He had two reasons for wanting to remain in Augusta. The first and most important was that Jane was likely to be here for some time yet; the second was that he had become involved in a mystery and hated to walk away from it. If he could bully Pobjoy into letting him in on the real investigation he could satisfy his curiosity, stay with Jane, and at the same time have a perfect excuse to give to Esther. Garrod gnawed his lower lip. He did not need to explain or justify anything to Esther. Ever again. Never, ever again.

"Now, Mr. GARROD," Pobjoy said, lowering his bulk into an armchair. "What is all this?"

Garrod noted the other man's return to the formal mode of address, and he



smiled. "I'm tired of playing games, that's all."

"I don't get it. What sort of games?"

"The sort in which you use my name and reputation to make the public think there's useful evidence in the ashes of Wescott's car—when all the time you and I both know there isn't any."

Pobjoy looked up at him over steepled fingers. "You can't prove that."

"I'm a trusting sort of a person," Garrod said patiently. "It's easy to bluff me—once. I don't need to prove what I say. All I have to do is put you in the position of needing to prove what *you* say. And that's what I'm about to do."

"Who's been talking to you?"

"You underestimate me, Pobjoy. Politicians are known to tell damn stupid lies when they get into tight corners, but they're accepted only by a public which is ignorant of the facts. I'm not a member of the public, in this instance, and I had a front row seat during your whole pantomime."

"Now tell me—who killed Senator Wescott?"

Pobjoy chuckled. "What makes you think I know?"

Garrod was tempted to mention Jane Wason—after all, he was in a position to recompense her for the loss of a job in multiples of a lifetime's salary—but he decided to carry it through alone. "I think you know because you tried bloody hard to make it appear that I, who couldn't possibly help, was able to provide the answer. You identified the killer—but the method you used is packed with too much political dynamite for it to be made public."

"This is just *so* stupid, man. Can you even suggest such a method?" Pobjoy spoke in a scathing, relaxed manner, but there were barely perceptible inflexions in his second sentence which spurred Garrod on. A chilly intuition stirred far back in his consciousness. He turned away and busied himself with another cigarette, both to hide his face from Pobjoy and to give himself time to think.

"Yeah," he said, mind still racing. "I can suggest a method."

"Such as?"

"A highly illegal use of Retardite."

"That's just a vague generality, Mr. Garrod—not a method."

"All right, I'll be a little less vague." Garrod sat down facing Pobjoy and stared into his eyes, filled with a new certainty. "Slow glass has already been used in satellites, but the ordinary man-in-the-street—doesn't mind that, because the recorded information is beamed down by television and nobody believes we'll ever have a TV system which could show up details as small as individual human beings. At orbital heights the loss of picture quality makes that impossible."

"Go on," Pobjoy said cautiously.

"But the resolution of slow glass is so good that in the right circumstances and atmospheric conditions and with the right optical equipment, turbulence compensators, et cetera, you could follow the movements of people and cars—provided you bring the glass down out of orbit for direct interrogation in a lab. And to do that all you need is a transfer system, small robot spacecraft, torpedoes really, which the mother satellite could fire down to



prearranged pick-up areas."

"Nice idea—but have you thought of the expense?"

"Astronomical, but justifiable in certain circumstances—such as major political assassinations."

Pobjoy lowered his face into his hands, sat quietly for a moment, then spoke through his fingers. "Does that idea horrify you?"

"It constitutes the most massive invasion of privacy anybody's ever heard of."

"When we were driving up to Bingham yesterday you said something about the huge drop in crime figures compensating for the citizens' loss of some rights."

"I know—but this new idea carries it to the point where a man couldn't be sure of being alone even on a mountain top or in the middle of Death Valley."

"Do you think the Government of the United States would spend millions of dollars just to watch a family having a picnic?"

Garrod shook his head. "You're admitting I'm right?"

"No!" Pobjoy jumped to his feet and walked to the window. He stared out into the verticalities of the city, then added in a quieter voice, "If . . . *If* such a thing were true—how could I admit it?"

"But if it were true, it would put you in the curious position of knowing Wescott's killer yet having to prove your case or appear to prove it by some other means."

"We've already gone over that ground, Mr. Garrod, but that's roughly the situation we *would* be in. What I

need to know now is—are you still determined to spread your theory around?"

"As you pointed out—it's only a theory."

"But one which could do a lot of . . ." Pobjoy chose his word with obvious care, ". . . mischief."

Garrod stood up and followed the other man to the window. "I could be persuaded not to. As the inventor of slow glass I feel sort of responsible—also I hate walking away from an unsolved problem."

"You mean you'll stay on as a member of the advisory panel?"

"Not on your life," Garrod said cheerfully. "I want to work on the real investigation. If you know your man we ought to be able to find some way to pin this thing on him."

TEN MINUTES LATER Garrod was in Jane Wason's room, in her bed. After yet another merging of bodies had ratified his new contract with life, he—although bound to secrecy—let her know that all her suspicions about Pobjoy's handling of the investigation had been correct.

"I thought so," she said. "John never said anything to me about it, but I know he's been trying to figure out their secret method."

"You mean he doesn't know?" Garrod was unable to resist boasting. "He mustn't have used the right approach to Pobjoy."

"I've been working with John long enough to know he uses the right approach to everything." She raised herself on one arm and looked down at



Garrod. "If he wasn't able to find out . . ."

Garrod laughed as he saw the speculative look in Jane's eyes and the beginning of a frown disturbing the fine line of her eyebrows. "Forget it," he said easily as he pulled the already-familiar torso across his own.

## CHAPTER 13

IT WAS OBVIOUS right from the start that Captain Peter Remmert disapproved of Garrod's intrusion. (He was a moody, changeable man; sometimes laconic and at others voluble in an incongruously bookish manner. Once during coffee he said to Garrod, "The rich amateur who solves murders as a hobby is no longer a credible figure, even in cheap fiction, thanks to the levelling out of the distribution of wealth. His heyday was the first half of the century when the anomaly of his position wasn't appreciated by a poor to whom the rich were incomprehensible beings who might very well turn detective just to pass the time.") But Remmert co-operated fully on what must have been, from his point of view, a tiresome and frustrating case. At the outset, all he knew was that he and a small selected team had been sworn to secrecy, given a name and address in Augusta, and told to do all they could to link the suspect with the assassination of Senator Wescott.

The suspect's name was Ben Sala. He was aged forty-one, of Italian extraction, and he ran a small wholesale

business specializing mainly in detergents and disinfectants. He lived, with his wife, in a smallish house in a middle-class district on the city's west side. They had no children and the upper part of the house was sublet to a fifty-year-old bachelor, Matthew H. McCullough, who drove for the local transit system.

As a matter of routine, Remmert did some checking into Sala's Italian ancestry and family, looking for a connection with the Mafia, but drew a blank. As he had been instructed not to make a direct approach to Sala about the assassination, the investigation seemed about to end almost before it had begun—until another death occurred.

On the morning after Senator Wescott's death among the exploding metallic vapors of his car, Sala's lodger—McCullough—died of a heart attack while climbing up into his bus.

The coincidence did not come to the attention of Remmert's team for several hours, and when it did they regarded it as little more than a ready-made excuse to pay a direct visit to Sala's home—at first. At that stage the results of certain interrogations of Traffic Department slow glass monitors became available. And they gave Remmert an unpleasant and unwanted surprise. He had been instructed to prove that Sala had carried out the assassination, and the monitors collaborated to the extent that they showed Sala's battered delivery truck leaving his home, heading north towards Bingham some hours before the killing, and returning by the same route some hours after it. There was a drawback, however.



The trapped images showed clearly that the truck had been driven by Matthew McCullough—the man who had died a natural death a few hours later.

And he had been alone.

"IT MEANT WE WERE ABLE to go into the Sala house and work properly," Remmert said. "The idea was that we were supposed to be checking up on McCullough, but all the time we were getting what we could on Sala."

"And what did you get?" Garrod kept staring at the projection screen in front of which was a still hologram of the front of Sala's house.

"Nothing, of course. McCullough was the guilty party."

"Wasn't it a little too convenient the way he dropped dead the next morning?"

Remmert snorted. "If that's convenient, I hope I remain inconvenienced till I'm a hundred."

"You know what I mean, Peter. If Sala was the killer, didn't everything drop into place a little too nicely when a man he could pin the blame on was silenced permanently the very next morning?"

"Sala isn't pinning the blame on McCullough—I am. Anyway I don't follow that line of reasoning. Supposing Sala had done it—would he want his tenant to attract the attention of the police by dropping dead? Besides, no matter what Pobjoy says, Sala didn't do it. We've got all kinds of evidence which backs up his statement."

"Let's run over the evidence."

Remmert sighed audibly but put the holoprojector on fast rewind. They had

requisitioned a Scenedow from a house which was almost directly opposite Sala's place and had made a holofilm covering the suspect's life during the previous year. The information from the Scenedow was also stored in Retardite recorders but—because a slow glass had the disadvantage of not being able to go into reverse—conventional holofilm was used for the practical work of examining evidence.

On the screen there appeared an image of the Sala house as it had been a year ago when the Scenedow had been installed. It was an ordinary two-storey frame building with a bay window downstairs supporting a small verandah on the upper level. The front garden was neatly kept and there was a garage attached to the main structure with its front flush with the building line. The windows in the top half of the garage door provided the only view of the interior.

Remmert began skipping through the reel, pausing here and there to show scenes of Sala and McCullough entering and leaving the place. Sala was a smallish thick-set man with black curling hair in the center of which his scalp could be seen glistening like polished leather. McCullough was taller and slightly stooped. He had steel-colored hair brushed back from a long doleful face, and appeared to keep very much to his own part of the house.

"McCullough doesn't look like a high-powered political assassin to me," Garrod commented. "Sala does."

"That's about the sum total of your case against him," Remmert said, freezing on an image of Sala working in his garden, shirt straining across a



protuberant stomach. "He's got the pycnic build."

"The what?"

"The pycnic build—that's the name psychiatrists have given to that shortish, plumpish thick-shouldered build which occurs so often among psychotic killers. But lots of harmless people are put together in exactly the same way."

Other images followed—diamond-clear fragments of ice snatched from the river of time—of Sala and his dark-haired wife, arguing, eating, dozing, reading, sometimes engaging in unsubtle loveplay, while all the time McCullough's lonely and humorless face brooded at the upper windows. Sala went to and from his place of business at regular hours in a white current-model pickup truck. Fall advanced quickly into winter and the snows came, then Sala was seen using a dented five-years-old utility truck instead of the newer model.

Garrod held up his hand for the film to stop. "Was Sala's business not going so well?"

"It's doing all right—he seems to be a shrewd business man at his own level."

"Did you ask him why he began using that old truck?"

"As a matter of fact, I did," Remmert replied. "In old-style detective work it's the sort of thing which wouldn't crop up, but in a Retardite run-through it becomes glaringly noticeable."

"What did he say?"

"He'd been planning to keep the newer truck for only another six or eight months anyway, then somebody made him a good offer for it. Sala said he just couldn't turn it down."

"Did you ask him how much he got?"

"No. I didn't care."

Garrod jotted a note down in his pad, and motioned for the holofilm to continue. The snows receded, sifted out of existence by the greens and blossom-colors of spring and summer. Fall was approaching again when a length of blue tarpaulin appeared on the roof of the garage. It was large enough to stretch over the entire roof and an edge hung down at the front, covering the windows of the door.

"What's the idea of that?" Garrod raised his hand again.

"His garage roof began to leak."

"Did it look bad? I didn't notice."

Remmert moved back in time a little and the roof was seen with disturbed felt tiles in several places. A few days earlier and they all appeared normal.

"That happened a bit suddenly, didn't it?"

"Beginning of September—there were a couple of freak storms. Sala is going to build a new garage so it wasn't worth his while to have a proper repair job done on the roof."

"Everything still clicking into place."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know. Look at the sloppy way the tarpaulin hangs down over the front of the garage, but Sala is very fussy about everything else."

"It probably keeps the rain out better that way." Remmert was beginning to sound impatient as Garrod made another note. "What could you make out of that?"

"Perhaps nothing—but when you've lived with slow glass as long as I have it changes your way of looking at



things." Garrod suddenly realised he was sounding pompous. "I'm sorry, Peter—is there anything of special interest between then and the night of the murder?"

"I don't think so, but maybe you . . ."

"Let's move up to the big night," Garrod said.

It was dark when the garage door swung up and then slid inwards with a movement which reminded Garrod of flaps being retracted on an airliner's wing. The truck nosed its way out towards the street, the door closing automatically behind it, and the image on the screen grew brighter as light intensifiers came into play. Remmert froze the action and the driver was clearly revealed as McCullough. He was wearing a hat which shaded his eyes, but there was no mistaking the long sad countenance.

"Traffic monitors recorded him right to the northern limits of the city," Remmert said. "Now watch the garage—the tarpaulin's been folded back a little and you can see in."

He speeded up the time flow, then dropped back to normal time when the digital indicator in a corner of the picture showed that half an hour had passed. The dark rectangles which were the garage windows flooded with white radiance and a man was seen within. He was stubby and black-haired—unmistakably Ben Sala.

While Sala was moving about the garage doing odd cleaning and tidying jobs, Remmert touched a button which triggered a recording of the suspect's statement:

"Well, roundabout seven that evenin' Matt came downstairs. He

wasn't lookin' too good—sorta gray, you know—and he was rubbin' his left arm like there was a pain in it. Matt told me the transit company had asked him to do a few hours overtime that night. Most of the time he went everywhere by bus 'cause he was allowed to ride everywhere free, but this time he asked me for the lend of the truck. He said it was 'cause he was tired and didn't feel up to walkin' up to the bus stop on the main road.

"I told him okay he could have the truck, so he went off in it about eleven. After he'd gone I did some work in the garage for about an hour, then I went to bed. I heard Matt bringin' the truck back some time in the middle of the night, but I didn't look to see what time it was. Next mornin' he went out to work like he always does, and that was the last time I saw him alive."

Remmert switched off the recording. "What do you think of that?"

"What do you think of it?"

"It was just a statement—I've taken thousands of them."

Garrod kept his eyes on the screen, where Sala's image could still be seen occasionally as he moved around the garage. "Sala doesn't talk like a professional communicator, and yet . . ."

"And yet?"

"He packed a tremendous amount of information into a short statement—all of it relevant, well-ordered, logical. Out of those thousands of statements you've taken, Peter, how many were there in which not one word was wasted?"

"The weight of damning evidence is piling up against Sala," Remmert said tartly. "He looks like he could be an



assassin, and he talks sensibly. You know we interview lots of people in here who don't use academic English, yet can make you see a thing better than a university don can. Have you never noticed that in interrogation scenes in crime movies the tough slum kids always get the best lines? The screenwriter's talent must be liberated by the knowledge that for a while—in this character—he can kick the subjunctive out the window.”

Garrod thought for a moment. “I’ve got an idea.”

Remmert was not listening. “One night last year I had a kid in here for questioning on a manslaughter charge, and I asked him why he had done it. Do you know what he said? He said, ‘All that the public ever reads in the papers about young people is that they keep going around doing welfare work and voluntary service—I wanted to let them see that some of us are real bastards.’ Now, that’s *better* than anything I’ve heard in the movies.”

“Listen,” Garrod said. “I’m seeing this holofilm for the first time, isn’t that right?”

“Right.”

“Would it improve my credibility if I made a prediction about something we’re going to see later in the film?”

“It might. Depends.”

“All right.” Garrod pointed at the screen. “Note that the tarpaulin on the garage roof has been folded back so that we can see inside through the door windows. My prediction is that after we’ve seen McCullough driving the truck back into the garage, the edge of that tarp will somehow fall down again and cover the windows.”

“What if it does? We’ve *seen* McCullough driving away and leaving Sala behind . . .” Remmert stopped speaking as the truck appeared on the screen, moved down the drive. The coded frequency in its headlight beam caused the garage door to swing up and the vehicle disappeared into the now-darkened interior. As the door was swinging down behind it, a loose strand from the tarpaulin seemed to snag part of the locking mechanism and the covering twitched downwards over the windows.

“That was pretty good,” Remmert conceded.

“I thought so, too.”

“But you can’t make predictions like that without a theory to base them on. What have you got up your sleeve?”

“I’m going to tell you, but first I need one extra piece of information,” Garrod said. “Just to confirm it in my own mind.”

“What do you want to know?”

“Can you find out how much Sala actually got paid for the truck he sold?”

“Huh? Come through to my office—I haven’t got a computer terminal here.” Remmert gave Garrod a frankly puzzled look as they walked to his office, but he refrained from asking any more questions. At his desk he tapped briefly on the keys of the terminal which was linked to the big police computer at the other side of the city. The machine chimed a second later and Remmert store of photoprinter tape.

He glanced at it and became even more puzzled. “It says here he got fifteen hundred dollars for it from a dealer out along the line.”

“I don’t know about you,” Garrod



said, the old triumphal pounding now filling his chest, "but if that truck had been mine I'd have had no difficulty in turning down that kind of an offer."

"It's hellish low, I must admit—which means Sala was drifting a bit in that part of his statement anyway. I can't understand why a sharp businessman like him would practically give away a good truck and buy a beat-up utility model."

"If you ask me, it was like this." Garrod began to explain his theory.

*When the word came to Ben Sala that it was time to move against Senator Wescott, he was dismayed. He had been hoping that the call would never come, somehow, but now that it had he had no choice but to act—the alternative would have been death, perhaps by a bomb planted in his next consignment of detergent. In any case, the plan had been so carefully worked out that there was practically no risk of detection.*

*The first step was to get hold of a G.M. Burro, an ultra-cheap delivery truck which had been tried out then discontinued by the manufacturers four years earlier. Its big feature, as far as Sala was concerned, was that all its transparencies were of flat glass and the windshield could be pivoted to admit air. Sala, however, was not concerned with letting air in—but with seeing out.*

*He sold his own truck and bought a Burro. The latter was quite difficult to obtain and he had to accept a model in poor condition, but it was adequate for his needs. He took the Burro home, began using it for his daily transportation, and set other phases of the plan into action. The first night on which there was a high wind he went into the*

*garage by the kitchen entrance and, working in complete darkness, loosened several roof tiles from the under side. A couple of days later he covered the roof with what appeared to be a randomly chosen piece of tarpaulin from his warehouse, but which had actually been carefully designed for its task. With the interior of his garage now hidden from the gaze of the Scenedow across the street, he was able to go ahead with assembly of the laser cannon which had been mailed to him piece by piece in small packages.*

*He also began work on one of the most delicate parts of the operation.*

*Thanks to the simplistic design of the Burro it was easy to remove the windshield and replace them with panels of Retardite. But getting Matt McCullough to sit in the driving seat for the best part of an hour was more difficult, even though he had been selected as a tenant because of his dullness. Sala solved the problem by telling McCullough the Burro had developed a fault in the steering linkage and that he was going to repair it himself. McCullough, who would only have been brooding at one of his windows anyway, agreed to sit in the truck and turn the wheel each time Sala called out to him. He even wore his old hat in case it would be drafty in the garage.*

*There was a crucial moment when McCullough got in and closed the door, but he failed to notice he was seeing the garage not as it actually was that night—and Sala was careful to stay underneath the vehicle the whole time. The truck's front wheels were in pools of thick oil which enabled them to be turned easily, and Sala—who had care-*



fully timed the drive along a simple, crossing-free route out of the city—was able to get McCullough to twist the steering wheel according to the prearranged program.

With the slow glass panels suitably charged with images of McCullough, Sala slowed their emission rate down to almost zero and put them away for future use. On another night, working under cover of the tarpaulin, he removed the windows from his garage door, replaced them with Retardite panels and spent an hour pottering about doing small jobs. These panels, too, he removed, slowed down almost to a standstill and put into storage for when they would be required. He was now ready to commit the foolproof murder.

On the evening he received the coded message to proceed he began by slipping Matt McCullough a strong sedative which would keep him away from the windows of the duplex at a time when he was supposed to be out driving. Sala then made certain the garage windows were covered from the outside, and put the assembled laser cannon into the truck. He clipped the Retardite panels into the garage door and into the frames of the Burro, increased their emissions to normal rate, and drove out of town towards Bingham.

It was at this stage that the unique design of the Burro played a vital role, because in a normal vehicle Sala would have had no vision of the road as it was that night. He tilted the windshield back until there was a hairline crack between the glass and the frame, through which he could see forward. The sharply restricted view made the trip fairly difficult, and there was an unexpected haz-

ard in that the sound of the engine and the sense of movement contrasted with the static view of the interior of his own garage in a way which produced disorientation and nausea.

Out in the country, however, beyond the view of slow glass monitors he was able to tilt the windshield back a little further and drive in comparative comfort. He also slowed the Retardite emissions down almost to zero, preserving the stored images of McCullough for the journey back through the city. The tell-tales on any car he met on the way would yield images of a motionless McCullough at the wheel, but this would be acceptable for highway conditions in which virtually no control movements were required of the driver. In any case, all these precautions were unlikely to be necessary because the murder would not be traced to the point where Sala would be involved. It was simply part of the plan that an entire back-up line of defense was included.

At the site chosen for the assassination Sala set up his cannon. A short time later a close-range personal radio message told him the Senator's car was near—and when it reached the bottom of the hollow he burned it and the driver into a heap of glowing, crackling slag.

On the trip back, he stopped several miles along the road and buried the cannon. He drove the rest of the way without incident and got back into his garage well before dawn. The hanging strand device he had carefully but unobtrusively rigged up drew the tarpaulin down over the windows as the garage door closed behind him. Sala took the Retardite panels out of the door and truck and replaced them with ordinary



glass. He then used a tickler on the slow glass to disturb its crystalline structure, blanking out the mute evidence forever. As a further precaution he broke the panels into small fragments and fed them into the furnace in the basement.

Only the final step in the plan remained. He went upstairs to McCullough's bedroom, took off the other man's hat and hung it in its usual place on the back of the door. He then took out a phial of specially prepared thrombogenic poison which had been sent to him by the organization. McCullough was still in a drugged sleep and he did not wake up while Sala was rubbing the traceless poison into the skin of his left arm. The position of the site on which Sala had chosen to apply the poison meant that McCullough would die of a massive embolism approximately four hours later.

Well satisfied with his night's work, Sala had a glass of milk and a sandwich before joining his wife in bed.

"When you concoct a theory," Remmert said slowly, "you really do it in a big way."

Garrod shrugged. "I used to be in the theory-concocting business. Actually this is a good one in that it explains all the observed facts, but it falls down in one major respect."

"Too complicated. Occam's Razor."

"No—in these days all murder plans have to be complicated. It's just that I can't think of any way to demonstrate its truth. I'll bet you'll find fresh scratches on the window frames in the truck and on the garage door—but that proves nothing."

"We might pick up traces of Retardite in the furnace."

"Possibly. But there's no law against incinerating slow glass, is there?"

"Isn't there?" Remmert bumped his forehead with the heel of his hand as if trying to jar his memory into action. Visual sarcasm. "Would you like to drive out to the Sala place? Have a look at the real thing?"

"Okay." Accompanied by another detective called Agnew they drove out to the west side of the city. The morning was now well advanced, with clouds fleeing across the blue ceramic of the sky, changing the quality of the light which reflected from the neat houses. The car climbed into a hilly suburb and stopped outside a white-painted house. Garrod experienced a peculiar thrill as he recognized the Sala place, his eyes picking out all the familiar details of the structure, garden and garage.

"It looks quiet," he said. "Is anybody likely to be at home?"

"I don't think so. We allow Sala to attend to his business but we have keys and he told us to go in anytime. He's co-operating like hell."

"In his position he has to do all he can to help you pin the blame on McCullough."

"I guess you'll be more interested in the garage than anywhere else."

They walked down the short drive and Remmert used a key to open the garage door manually. The interior smelled of paint, gasoline and dust. Watched by the two officers, Garrod walked around the garage self-consciously lifting odd objects, empty cans and old magazines, and setting them



down again. He had a conviction he was making a fool of himself, but reluctant to leave the garage.

"I don't see any oil patches on the floor," Remmert said. "How did he turn the wheels?"

"With these." Garrod's memory came to his aid. He pointed at two glossy magazines which had tire marks on the covers and heavily creased pages inside. "It's an old DIY trick—you run the front wheels onto slick magazines and they turn easily."

"It doesn't prove anything, does it?"

"It does to me," Garrod said stubbornly.

Remmert lit a cigarette and Agnew a pipe, and the two detectives wandered out into the nervously buffeting air. They stood smoking for a good ten minutes, conversing in low voices, then began glancing at their watches to indicate they were ready for lunch. Garrod felt the same way—he had arranged to eat with Jane—yet he had a feeling that if he did not make a breakthrough on this visit, when he was seeing the interior of the garage with that special clarity which is present only when something is viewed for the first time, he would never get anywhere.

Agnew tapped out his pipe with a gentle clicking sound and went to sit in the car. Remmert sat down on the low garden wall and appeared to take an intense interest in cloud formations. Wishing the others would go away and leave him, Garrod took a final walk around the garage and saw a fragment of glass close to the wall which adjoined the house. He knelt and picked it up, but the simplest test—moving a finger behind it—showed that it was

ordinary glass.

Remmert stopped inspecting the sky. "Get anything?"

"No." Garrod shook his head dispiritedly. "Let's go."

"You bet." Remmert pulled the overhead door part way down, darkening the garage.

Garrod's face was close to the unpainted inner wall and as he moved, in the very instant of straightening up, he saw a faint circular image appear on the dry boards. There was a dim silhouette of a rooftop, a ghostly tree waving its branches—and they were upside down. Spinning on his heels, he faced the outer wall of the garage and saw a bright, white star shining there, about five feet above the floor. There was a small hole in the woodwork. He approached it and put his eye to the tiny aperture. A jet of cold air from outside played on his eye like a hose, producing tears, but he saw through to the sunlit world of ascending hillside and houses nesting in baskets of shrubbery. He went to the door, stopped below its lower edge and beckoned to Remmert.

"There's a small hole in this wall," he said. "It's angled downwards slightly, so you don't notice it when you're walking about."

"What difference . . . ?" Remmert stooped and looked through the hole. "I don't know—do you think it's big enough to be of any use?"

"Of course! If Sala really had been moving around in here an outside observer would see the chink of light blinking on and off—but if he wasn't here, only programmed into the slow glass in the windows, the light will have



remained constant."

"How many houses can you see through there?"

"Ah . . . twelve for sure. Some of them are pretty far away though."

"It doesn't matter. If one of those houses has a Scenedow facing this way you can wind up the case this afternoon." Garrod kicked the fragment of glass he had discovered out into the shifting sunlight—he was certain a slow glass witness would be found.

Remmert stared at him for a moment, then punched his shoulder. "I've got binoculars in the car."

"Go and get them," Garrod said. "I'll make a location sketch of the houses we're interested in."

He took out his notepad and looked through the hole again, but decided the sketch was unnecessary. The hill had been plunged into cloud-shadow, and even with the naked eye he could see that one of the houses had a window which glittered green with transposed sunlight, like a rectangular emerald.

## CHAPTER 14

THE NEWS that Ben Sala had been arrested for the murder of Senator Wescott was broadcast in the late afternoon. Garrod was alone in his olive-and-gold suite, waiting for Jane to finish her day's secretarial work with John Mannheim. For almost an hour he had been standing at a window looking at the street twenty storeys below, and he had not been able to rid himself of the sense of apprehension which heaved coldly in his stomach.

Arriving back at the hotel after lunch, he had received a message from Esther, one he had been expecting. It said: *I am arriving in Augusta this evening and will be at your hotel by 19:00. Wait for me. Love, Esther.*

Since sending his own message he had been hoping to hear from his wife, wanting to get the final confrontation tucked into the past where it ought to be—but now, suddenly, he was afraid. His wife's final sentence—*Love, Esther*—read in context, meant there was not going to be a clean break, that she still regarded him as her property. It was all going to be drawn-out, bloody and abrasive.

Analysing his own feelings, he realised he was afraid of his own moral softness, the almost pathological inability to hurt other people, even when it was necessary, even when all parties would benefit from a swift, decisive stroke. He could think of dozens of examples, but in the introspective mood his mind sprang to the very earliest, back when he was a boy of ten running with a small gang in Barlow, Oregon.

*The young Alban Garrod had never fitted in very well and he was desperately anxious to win the approval of the gang leader, a plump but physically powerful boy called Rick. His chance came when he was walking home from school with an unlikeable lad named Trevor, who was high on the gang's "execution list." Trevor incautiously made a disparaging remark about Rick, and—in spite of feelings of self-revulsion—Alban reported the incident to Rick. Rick accepted the news gratefully and conceived a plan. The gang was to surround Trevor in an alley and Rick*



would utter a formal accusation. If Trevor admitted his guilt he would be worked over to teach him a lesson, and if he denied it he was calling both Rick and Alban liars, which would earn him an equally severe punishment. Everything went well until the crucial moment.

After the ritual ripping open of his fly, which was always done to put an enemy at a psychological disadvantage, Trevor was backed against a wall, with his lapels gathered up in Rick's fist. He frantically denied ever having uttered the fateful words. In accordance with his own obscure code, Rick was not yet entitled to deal a blow. He looked at Alban for confirmation.

"He said it, didn't he?"

Alban stared at Trevor, a boy he despised, and quailed when he saw the terror and pleading in his eyes. Feeling sick inside, he said, "No. I didn't hear him saying anything about you."

Rick released his hold on his prisoner and allowed him to scurry away to safety, then he turned to Alban with a look of bafflement which changed to contempt and anger. He advanced with heavy fists swinging. The ten-year-old Alban accepted his beating with something approaching relief—all that mattered was that he had not had to crush another human being.

With Garrod's personal history, and without Jane actually there to steady him, there was a possibility—a very faint one, but a possibility nonetheless—that if Esther came at him the right way he would agree to go back home with her and become a dutiful husband again. The thought brought a tingle of cool perspiration to his face.

He leaned his head against the glass of the window and stared down at the minute colored rectangles which were automobiles and the even smaller specks which were people in the street below. Seen from almost directly overhead the pedestrians had no identity—it was barely possible to separate men from women—and he found it difficult to accept that each one of the creeping dots regarded itself as the center of the universe. Garrod's depression grew more intense.

He went into his bedroom, lay on top of the bedcovers and tried to doze, but sleep was impossible. After twenty restless minutes he broke one of his strictest rules by activating the bedside viewphone and calling his Portston headquarters to check on how things were going. He spoke to Mrs. Werner first and got a rundown on the important developments of the past few days, then he talked to several divisional and department heads, including Manston who wanted guidance on how to handle Garrod's connection with the current news break. Another was Schickert, in a near-panic over the fact that a Governmental purchasing agency was placing new priority orders for Retardite particles so quickly that even if the new Liquid Light Paints plant had been in operation it would have been impossible to keep up. Garrod soothed him down and spent an hour in conference with other senior management.

By the time he had finished there was less than an hour to go till Esther's arrival and he was in no mood for sleeping. He went to the bathroom and, scorning the idea of blacking it out,



took a shower with all the lights on. His short association with Jane Wason, he realized, was what had made him careless of vicarious watchers. Conscious of and uplifted by the beauty of her own body, she simply refused to hide under cover of darkness at any time, including the hours with him. The thought of her brought with it a mingled pang of desire and regret. Life with Jane would have been so . . .

Garrod panicked as he understood that already, before a word had been spoken, he was anticipating a victory for Esther.

*I choose Jane*, he told himself, stepping out of the shower cubicle. *I choose life.*

But later when his doorbell sounded he felt himself begin to die. He opened it slowly and saw Esther standing there accompanied by her personal nurse. She was carefully dressed, with a minimum of make-up, and was wearing ordinary black glasses of the type used by people who have disfigured eyes.

"Alban?" she said in a pleasant voice. *She's going to be brave*, he thought sadly. *Blind—hence the dark glasses—but brave.*

"Come in, Esther." He included the nurse in his gesture, but she had obviously been primed by his wife and moved backwards into the corridor, her coral-pink antiseptic face showing her disapproval of him.

"Thank you, Alban." Esther held out her hand, but he took her elbow instead and led her to a chair.

He sat down opposite. "Did you have a good trip?"

She nodded. "You were right all along, Alban. I *can* get around in spite

of my handicap. I've just flown thousands of miles to be with you."

"I'm . . ." The significance of Esther's final words was not lost on Garrod. "That's wonderful, for you."

She in turn picked up his final words. "Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Of course I'm glad to see you out and about again."

"That isn't what I asked you."

"Isn't it?"

"No." Esther was sitting very erect, hands neatly folded in her lap. "When did you begin to hate me, Alban?"

"For God's sake! Why should I hate you?"

"That's what I'm asking myself. I must have done something very . . ."

"Esther," he said firmly. "I don't hate you." He looked closely at her precision-cast features, saw the faint lines of stress there, and his heart sank.

"You just don't love me, is that right?"

*This is it*, he thought. *This is the exact second on which your whole future depends.* He opened his mouth to give the answer she had invited, but his mind was engulfed in a cryogenic chill. He stood up, went to the window and looked into the street below. The anonymous specks which thought of themselves as people were still swarming down there. *How the hell*, he asked himself, *could an observer in a satellite, looking straight down, tell one man from another?*

"Answer me, Alban."

Garrod swallowed, wishing he could escape, but unrelated pictures were flickering behind his eyes. A small crop-spraying aircraft drifting across the sky, shining like a silver crucifix.



Schickert in a panic because his plant could not keep up with orders for Retardite dust. The dark countryside, glowing . . .

Esther's groping hands touched his back. She had risen from the chair without his noticing. "You've given me all the answer I need," she said.

"Have I?"

"Yes." Esther took a deep, quavering breath. "Where is she now?"

"Who?"

Esther laughed. "Who? Your new bedmate, that's who. That . . . *hooker* who wears the silver make-up."

Garrod was appalled. It seemed to him that Esther had used a frightening power to look into his mind. "What makes you think . . . ?"

"Do you think I'm a fool, Alban? Did you forget you were wearing my eye disks at the luncheon on the day you got here? Do you think I didn't see the way John Mannheim's girl looked at you?"

"I don't remember her looking at me in any special way," Garrod fenced.

"I'm blind," Esther said bitterly, "but I'm not as blind as you pretend to be."

Garrod stared at her and again his thoughts ricocheted away. *Miller Pobjoy didn't mention satellites. I was the one who thought up the satellite story, and all he did was let me go along with it! I've known this all along, and it's been chewing me up, but I couldn't face . . .*

The door swung open and Jane Wason walked in. "I've just finished, Al, and . . . Oh!"

"It's all right, Jane," Garrod said. "Come in and meet my wife. Esther, this is Jane Wason. She does secretarial work for . . . John Mannheim."

Esther smiled sweetly, but deliberately facing in the wrong direction to emphasise her blindness. "Yes, do come in, Jane. We've just been talking about you."

"I think it would be better if I didn't intrude."

Esther's voice hardened. "I think it would be better if you stayed. We're trying to decide exactly who is the real intruder around here."

Jane advanced into the room, her large eyes fixed on Garrod's face, waiting for him to speak. He felt utterly incapable of dealing with the situation.

"Speak up, Alban. Let's make it clean and sharp and final," his wife said.

Garrod looked down into Esther's face. Her age and tiredness were showing up in contrast to Jane's lush youthfulness. She had just crossed a continent, blind, to face him. Of the three people in the room she was the only one at a crippling disadvantage, yet she was dominating the group. She was strong. She was brave, but sightless and helpless, waiting with her face turned up to his. All he had to do was take the verbal axe firmly in both hands—and swing on her . . .

He closed his eyes for a moment, and when he opened them Jane was leaving the room. Garrod ran to her. "Jane," he said desperately, "give me a chance to think."

She shook her head. "Colonel Mannheim's finished in Augusta now. I just came by to tell you I'll be flying down to Macon with him on the late plane."

He caught her wrist but she twisted free with unexpected strength. "Leave



me alone, Al."

"I can work this thing out."

"Yes, Al. You can—just the way you worked it out about the . . ." The end of her sentence was lost in the slamming of the door, but Garrod did not need to hear it. He knew the last word had been "satellites."

His legs were rubbery as he turned back into the room and sat down. Esther found her way to him and rested her hands on his shoulders. "My poor dear Alban," she whispered.

Garrod lowered his face into cupped hands. *There are no satellites, he thought. No torpedoes carrying Retardite eyes down out of orbit. They don't need them. Not when they're dusting the whole world with slow glass!*

A preternatural calm seemed to descend over his brain as he considered the mechanics of the proposition. The resolution of Retardite's crystalline structure was so fine that a usable image could be obtained from a particle a few microns in diameter. Yet each speck would be invisible to the naked eye under normal conditions. They were using it in hundreds of tons—Retardite dust of mixed delays, swirling down over the entire continent from crop-sprayer aircraft. Such aircraft generally used electrically charged ejector nozzles, giving the particles an electromagnetic potential which caused it to be attracted onto the crops rather than drift straight onto the ground. Only in this case, the slow glass micro-eyes were being released from high up so that they would cling to everything—trees, buildings, telegraph poles, flowers, mountain slopes, birds, flying insects. It would be in people's cloth-

ing, in their food, in the water they drink.

*From now on, came the silent scream inside his head, anybody, any agency, with the right equipment can find out anything about ANYBODY! This planet is one huge, unblinking eye watching everything that moves on its surface. We're all encased in glass, asphyxiating, like bugs dropped into an entomologist's killing bottle.*

*And I . . .* The seconds crept by, noisy with the sound of blood pulsing in his veins. *And I did it!*

WHEN GARROD STOOD UP he lifted the incomprehensible weight of the planet with him. And he discovered, with infinite gratitude, that he could support it.

"Esther," he said peacefully, "You asked me an important question a while ago."

"Yes?" Her voice was wary, as though she could already sense a change in him.

"The answer is—no. I don't love you, Esther, and I realize now that I never did."

"Don't be stupid," she said, with a frightened harshness in her voice.

"I'm sorry, Esther. You asked me, and I told you how it is. I must go and find Jane now. I'll send in your nurse." He walked out of the room without hurrying, without needing to hurry, and went to Jane's room on the floor below. The outer door was open and he could see she had begun to pack. She was bending over one of her cases in an unintentionally voluptuous pose which produced a slow and powerful hammering in his chest.



"You lied to me," he said in mock severity. "You said you were taking the late plane."

Jane turned to face him with transparent ribbons of tears on her cheeks. "Please let me get away from you, Al."

Garrod said, "No. Not ever again."

"Al, have you . . . ?"

"Yes. I've ended one thing that should never have started, and I want your help while I do the same thing with something else."

Jane was with him when he went to a newspaper office and told his story, and she was with him during the hard months which followed when a panic-stricken Government was forced by the people to create new legislation banning the production of slow glass. She was with him during the even harder years when it was realised that other

countries were continuing with Retardite production, eventually adulterating the oceans with it, and the air itself—even up to the stratosphere. In later decades, men were to come to accept the universal presence of Retardite eyes, and they learned to live without subterfuge or shame as they had done in a distant past when it was known that the eyes of God could see everywhere.

Jane was with him through all that, and one of the ways in which he knew he loved her was that, no matter how hard he tried, he could not visualize her beautiful face ever growing older. To him she was ageless, eternal—like a lovely image enshrined forever in a prism of slow glass.

—BOB SHAW

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(Continued from page 55)

illegally producing and selling potent sleeping pills known as 'Smileaways.' They permitted the individual small lapses of sleep, stimulating the opening of the FDG, and thereby producing dreams. The effects are rather pleasant—the dreams are very vivid and at the outset of any bad experience the mind's own mechanisms, acting in conjunction with the stabilizer, automatically awakens you. Taken in moderation, the pills are harmless. But as is usually the case, when taken to extremes, the results can be harmful . . . disastrous, in fact, as in your case. After prolonged use, the FDG becomes permanently opened, creating a continuous outpouring of unconscious material into the conscious mind. Sleep

becomes impossible, for eventually it would take a fatal dose to induce sleep—you would die, go to sleep forever, so to speak. So what happens is that your own conscious reality conflicts and merges with the constant flow of unconscious realities—past, present, future, imaginative, unknown—it's endless, really, creating a third chaotic and ever changing reality. What you, and an alarming number of others must do is learn to live within the boundaries and confines of whatever particular reality you're in at the moment."

Joe made no reply. He was in a Sopwith Camel, balling Ellen what's her name over Cuba.

—BRUCE PALEY



**PORTFOLIO:**

**FRANK R. PAUL**

**RALPH 124C 41+**

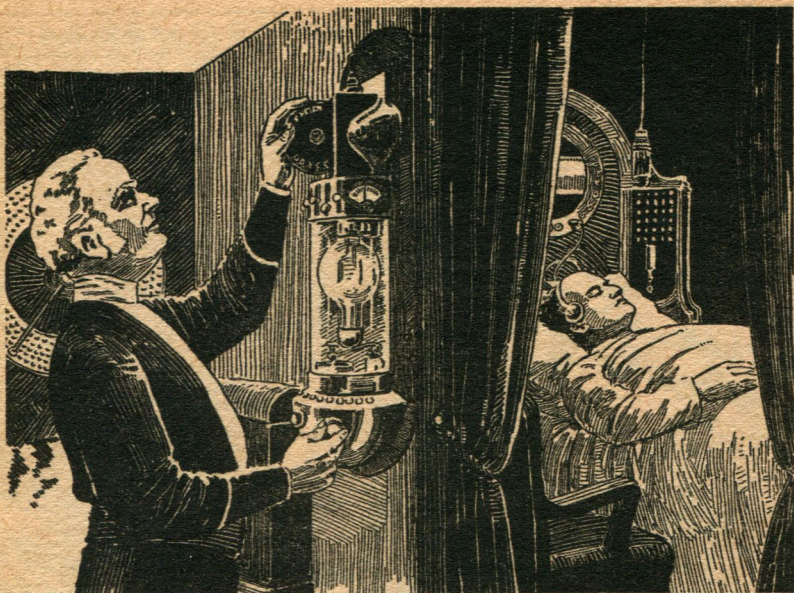
**by HUGO GERNSBACK**



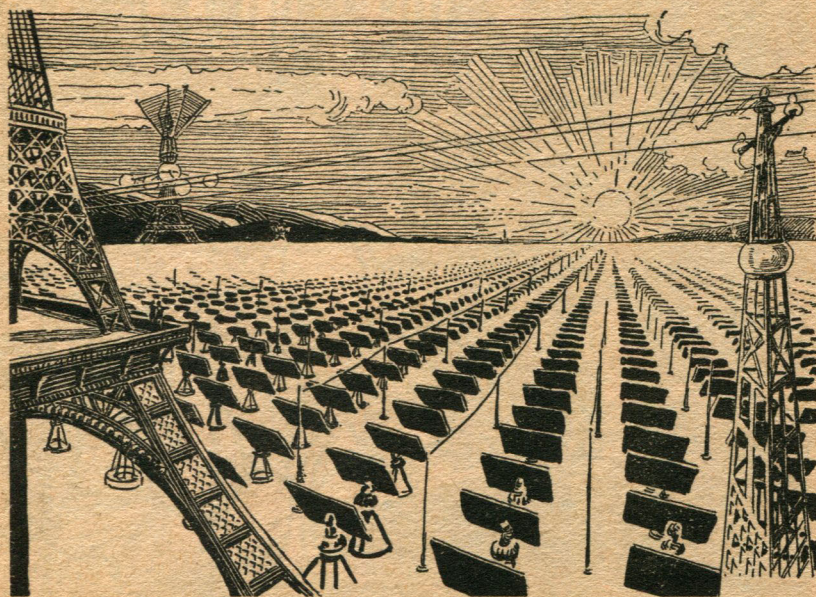
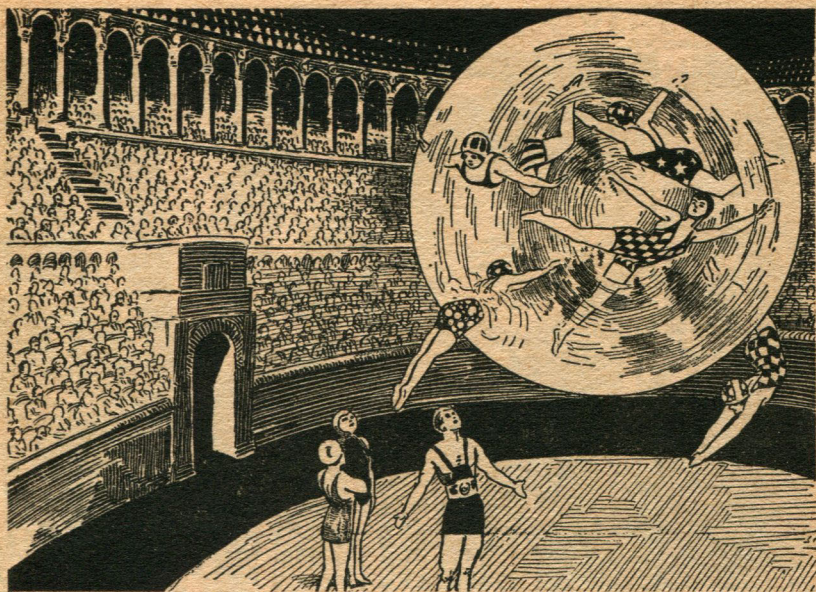








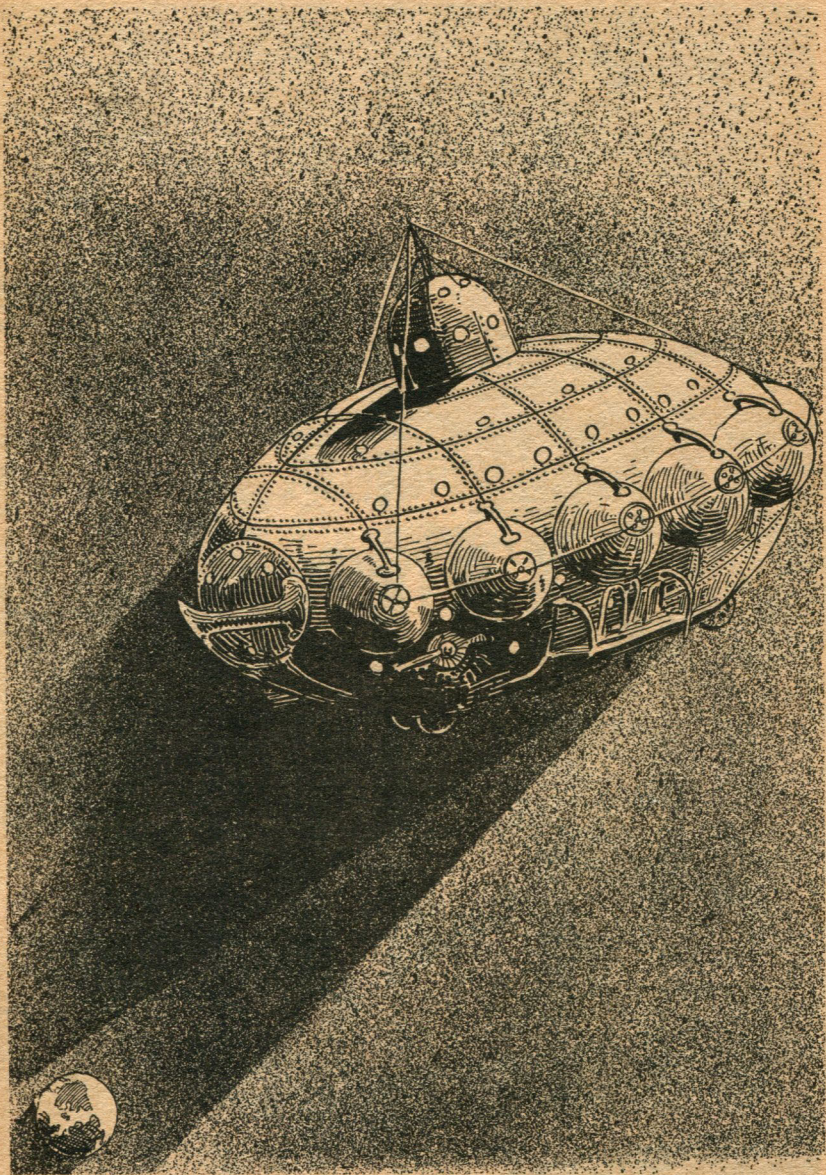




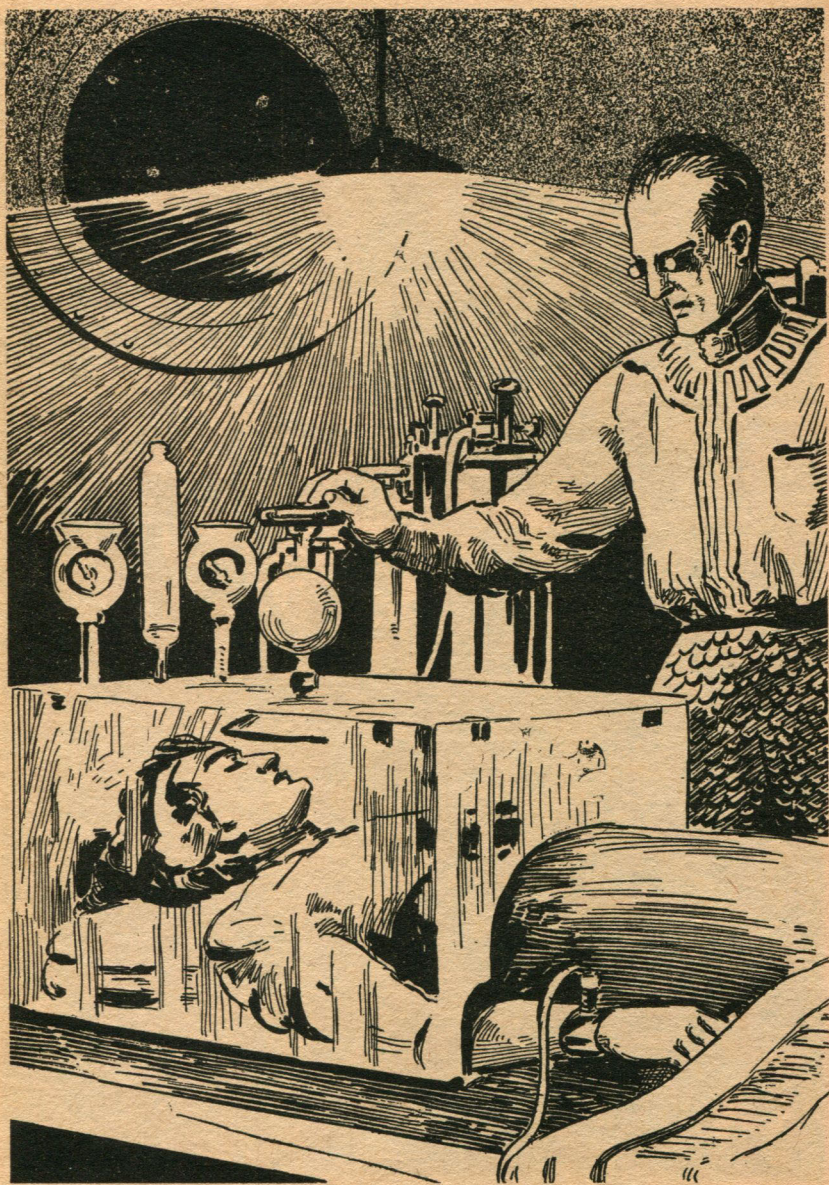




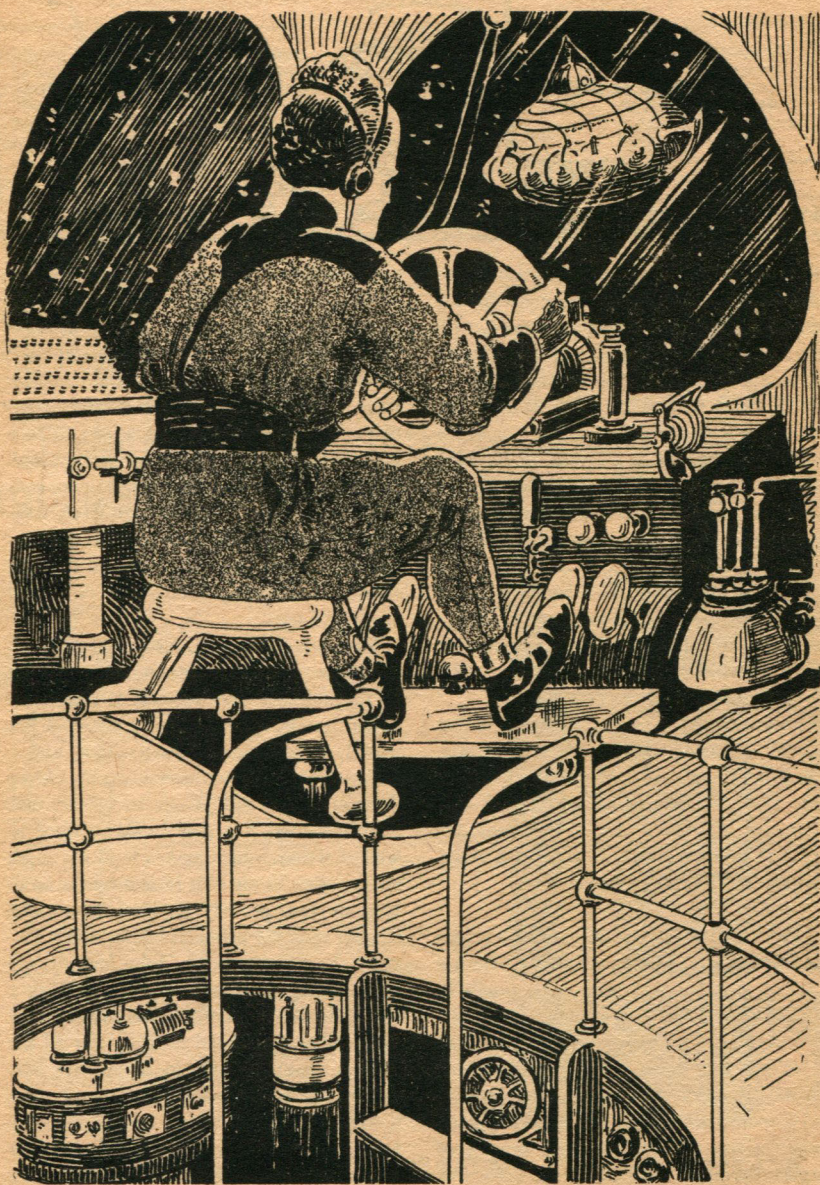








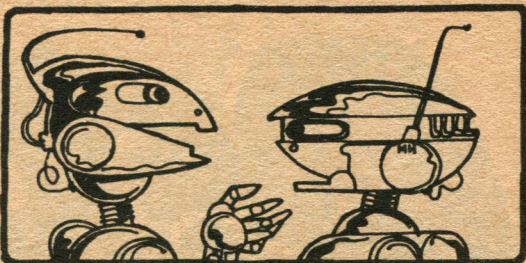






JOHN D. BERRY

## \* THE CLUBHOUSE



THE LAST COLUMN that I wrote in this magazine nearly matched my all-time low for the number of fanzines actually reviewed, with only two long reviews and a two-paragraph notice about *The Enchanted Duplicator* to preface the usual fanzine listing at the back. The expanded space that I devoted to those two fanzines served its purpose, in allowing me to quote for you some examples of good fanwriting, and I'll continue this practice in the future wherever it seems practical. But this time I intend to reverse tack; I'm going to try to set a record *high* for number of fanzines reviewed in this column. There are too many good fanzines being published to relegate them all to a terse listing.

SCYTHROP #23-4, June & Aug., 1971; A\$0.40, 6/A\$2.40, or 6/US\$3; bimonthly, from John Bangsund, Parergon Books, GPO Box 4946, Melbourne 3001, AUSTRALIA (USAgent: Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple St., Apt. 3-J, Brooklyn, NY 11201); 24 & 4 pp. respectively, mimeographed.

John Bangsund is one of the finest word-smiths currently working in fanzines. He has a talent that has not been seen much in fandom of late: he loves to play with words. He is well-read far beyond the limited field of sf, and this gives to his prose and his fanzine a quality of erudition, of intelligent and sometimes dazzling play in the English language and in our particular branch of English literature that makes the arrival of

a new issue of *Scythrop* an exciting event. It is also a rare event, as Australian fanzines have a way of arriving in American mailboxes without warning, months after their date of publication, like mysterious treasures from some far-off land. The fanzines actually belie my description, once you get into them, because Australian fandom is a casual, friendly, and lively place, and who ever heard of a casual, friendly, and lively treasure? *Scythrop* is the best product of Australian fandom, and it's a shame that the fanzine is suffering from a lack of money on John's part.

Since the 22nd issue, John has been conscious that his wordgames sometimes went so far that they were barriers to communication instead of aids. This realization has added a dimension to his fanzine, and it makes *Scythrop* more fascinating by adding a sense of life and people to literacy and wit. Bangsund is a consummate editor as well as writer, which makes it all the more excruciating to see him bound by the strictures of sheer poverty. *Scythrop* 23 is much smaller than the previous issues, and it features almost no artwork. John had already begun using micro-elite type in #22, in a two-column format, but in the current issue he is reduced to typed headings for all the articles, separated only by fancy lines with hardly any white space on the page. It is a tribute to John that he has managed to keep everything neat and attractive despite the cramped space. This issue was only made



possible because he could mail it out along with another Australian fanzine, riding along for free as long as he kept *Scythrop* small enough not to send the total package over the weight limit into a higher postage rate. #24 is a stopgap issue, containing nothing but a few remarks from the editor and a few letters, and in it John explains that he simply cannot continue publishing unless he gets a good number of cash subscriptions.

Obviously, I think he deserves those subscriptions.

There is more than just the brilliance of John Bangsund's writing, and the way it is painfully turned on his own penniless situation in the editorial of #23. *Scythrop* is the leading journal of Australian fandom, and *Scythrop* is also a very well-edited fanzine indeed. Bangsund attracts good writers, and while most of them fall short of his level, he knows how to present them at their best; the entire fanzine is highly readable and gives an impression of interreaction and a distinct gestalt. Much of this comes from the strong Australian feel: many of the writers are not Australian, but in both articles and letters they comment on the fanzine's Australianness and so add to it. This is what makes a memorable gestalt in fandom: a varied group of writers trading lines and playing with each other's words and personalities in and about and around their discussions and arguments. When this is done with talent, as it is here, the fanzine is more fun than any other kind, and it will certainly go down in the history of fandom as a fanzine to be remembered.

I wonder, sometimes, why it is that it's almost always non-American fanzines these days that can keep a happy balance between discussions of science fiction and the interplay of fannish personalities. *Highly Recommended.*

ALGOL #17, Nov., 1971; 75¢ or 4/\$3; irregular, from Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple St., Apt. 3-J, Brooklyn, NY 11201; 44 pp., offset.

*Algol* is one of the handsomest of fanzines. Andy Porter has had long experience in the field of magazine publishing, professional as well as fannish, and he produces a quality fanzine that is characterized by black press-type headings and sometimes full pages of perfectly-reproduced artwork and pages of black, neat text, all on clean white sheets of saddle-stitched (or rather saddle-stapled), high-grade paper. The fanzine is thoroughly professional-looking, yet simple enough in its excellent layout that it has never yet been accused of being too "cold" or "formal." It is worth talking first about *Algol's* appearance, because much of the care that Andy lavishes on the fanzine goes into its packaging.

Because of this, each issue is a major effort, and the schedule tends to approach "annual." This kind of time-span makes it difficult to carry on lively discussions in the lettercolumn or to give the fanzine an air of immediacy. *Algol* comes as a surprise each time it's published, and I'm afraid that because of its infrequent schedule it is often forgotten by fans. It does not deserve to be.

The level of written material is always high, although the type of material varies widely. This issue everything ties neatly in with science fiction in some way. Two articles form the real backbone of the issue: "The Influence of Fandom," by Robert A.W. Lowndes, and "John W. Campbell & the Meat Market," by John Bangsund. Both authors are outstanding writers, and both seem less concerned with language than usual in these articles. Lowndes contributes eleven pages on the history of fandom's influence on the field of professional science-fiction—which as far as I know no one has ever considered in a single, comprehensive article before—and a great deal of it will be entirely new to present-day fans, since it concerns the early days of sf. Lowndes is at his best in talking about ideas; this article is almost all narrative. It's fascinating stuff, but the best parts of the article



are the occasional places where Lowndes leaves the narrative to go off and muse on his ideas a bit. Farther on in the issue, Bangsund's article is also largely narrative, but its purpose is not to relate incidents but rather to transcribe bits of John's life to paper to show how intimately the seemingly-remote figure of John W. Campbell is tied up in the life of a science fiction fan.

"In the beginning, God . . ." and then, some considerable time later, John Campbell. Two years before I was born, he was appointed editor of a magazine called *As-tounding Stories*. I am now 32. Eight weeks ago I found myself out of work. Yesterday I got a job, and Apollo XV was launched. In between, on 11th July, John Campbell, still editor of the same magazine, died.

"It could be fairly convincingly argued, I feel, that my being out of work, and the launching of Apollo XV, and a myriad other momentous and trivial things, can be traced back to John Campbell."

The article is sometimes dreamlike, because much of it comes from a dream that John Bangsund had. It's interesting both for the observations about Campbell and for the further glimpse into the life and mind of John Bangsund.

The rest of the articles in *Algol* are all by well-known writers. Greg Benford talks about how you can make a much better living in the sf field if you get into the publishing end than if you're a solely a writer; the piece is compact, concentrated, as Greg's writing invariably is. Robert Bloch tells about the old pulp days and how he came to write the Lefty Feep stories; Bloch seems unable to keep a straight face, so his reminiscences are laced with irrepressible twists of humor. Dick Lupoff contributes another column of book reviews, but in these days of The Book Review in fandom, "Lupoff's Book Week" just reads like another review column, albeit distinguished by the way Dick develops *one* idea in each review.

The lettercolumn is literate and extensive,

despite the length of time between issues. The one thing that *Algol* could use more of is Andy Porter's writing; there's less than a page and a half of short paragraphs by him in this issue, plus comments in the lettercolumn, and Andy is much too skillful a writer to limit himself to that. *Highly Recommended.*

FOCAL POINT vol. 3, no. 4, Nov., 1971; 3/\$1; monthly, from Arnie Katz, 59 Livingston St., Apt. 6-B, Brooklyn, NY 11201; 24 pp., mimeographed.

When *Focal Point* was being published as a small, biweekly fanzine with news as well as articles, it was truly the focal point of a loose group of fans who preferred fandom and humorous writing to discussing the world of professional science fiction. The Bob Shaw Fund was launched in *Focal Point* and the progress of the fund charted there, and a fanzine that popped into your mailbox every two weeks was a natural one to send anything that you wanted published quickly. But last spring, Arnie decided to quit the biweekly format and let FP grow into a twenty-four-page monthly fanzine, like his wife Joyce's *Potlatch*. (This made two monthly fannish fanzines coming out of the same household, which is frankly rather incredible. This kind of activity generates more activity, and several more fanzines have been coming out of Brooklyn fandom as well. Incredible.) The issues since this change have been solid and entertaining, featuring some of the best fannish material of the year. ("Fandom's Leading Monthly Except For *Potlatch*") is what Terry Carr calls *Focal Point*.)

The monthly schedule seems to have slipped, so this is the latest issue. It isn't a typical issue; it has less memorable material, but what it does have exemplifies the hang-loose, unserious attitude of a fannish approach to fandom. Most of this issue consists of an sf story written by Terry and Carol



Carr, Gerard F. Conway, and George Alec Effinger one evening at the Carrs' when they were all feeling silly. What this is, really, is the professional equivalent of a fannish drunken one-shot fanzine. "It was all there," says Terry, "the frantic pace, the party going while each person typed, the asides in the narrative about what was being said in the room, the playfulness that characterize the most enjoyable (to produce) oneshots." No one would ever claim that "The Baby Pit" is a good science fiction story, but it is ridiculous and a lot of fun. And nobody is as wonderfully aware of the ridiculousness of fandom—and prodom—as Terry Carr; his introduction and closing remarks in presenting the story are great by themselves.

The rest of the issue is similarly light and fun. From front cover to back the fanzine is full of cartoons, most of them illustrating or taking off from the written material. On the back cover is a mailing-label cartoon by Bill Rotsler: "*Focal Point*, the Bellybutton of All Known Fandom." Arnie's editorial is all about crazy things like Trojan mimeograph stencils and pornography in Archie comic books. The lettercolumn consists entirely of one surreal and funny letter from Greg Benford. Even Harry Warner succumbs to the atmosphere and contributes a very light installment of his fan history column, all about the heyday of SAPS (the Spectator Amateur Press Society) around 1957, when they were surely among fandom's most dedicated producers of serious constructive silliness.

So you see, even though this issue of *Focal Point* has little or nothing that you'd look back on and want to reprint years from now, it's plenty of fun. And most issues do have more memorable stuff. *Highly Recommended*.

RATS! #13-4, Dec., 1971, & Feb., 1972; 35¢ or 3/\$1; irregular, from Bill Kunkel, 72-41 61st St., Glendale, NY 11227, and Charlene Komar, 85-30 121st St., Kew Gardens, NY

11415; 20 & 32 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

*Rats!* is an utterly unique fanzine, despite its superficial resemblance to the other fanzines coming from Brooklyn fandom. What ties these fanzines together, and what makes imperceptive readers say "They all look the same," is the constant interchange of ideas, influences, and running jokes between fans who get together every week or so and who do the actual physical work of running off their fanzines at joint publishing sessions. It's a natural process, but it hardly makes their fanzines interchangeable. The only close similarity between *Rats!* and the other Brooklyn fanzines is in the fact that Bill and Charlene tend to talk about Brooklyn fandom in their editorials. A stronger influence is the long-dead fanzine *Void*, which Greg Benford and Ted White published (with others as co-editors part of the time) in the early '60's. There's the similar use of micro-elite type for the editorials and the lettercolumn, with larger type on the articles in the middle of the mag, and there are occasional tricks of layout that come from *Void*. (The layout is original, and quite good looking, in the articles, but the micro-elite portion often looks crowded and chaotic.) But the greatest similarity is the life and mirth that flow through the pages, and that can't be copied or counterfeited. There's a great deal of collective fannish energy focussing in *Rats!*, most evidently in a long, lively, well-edited lettercolumn, and in the profusion of cartoons scattered throughout the fanzine.

The most significant thing in these pages is the return of Ray Nelson to fan activity. Earlier issues featured two transcripts from a radio show that he has been doing in the San Francisco Bay Area; these two issues feature a lot of Ray's cartoons, which are among the funniest and the most perfectly fannish that are being drawn. There is very fine writing here, too, most of it on the order



of people just talking about what they've been doing or what's on their minds, or perhaps responding to what's on someone else's mind. The editorial personality is characterized by the slice-of-life accounts by Bill and Charlene of their urban environment, most especially the bizarre and sometimes sordid drug culture that Bill tells stories of. As if to counter this, #14 features a fanhistorical article by Harry Warner about FAPA (the Fantasy Amateur Press Association), but this fits in nicely with the general fannish aura that pervades the fanzine, cropping up in odd corners with short quotes from old fanzines that fill up the empty spaces at the end of articles. *Highly Recommended.*

CIPHER #4-5, Oct. & Nov., 1971: 35¢ or 3/\$1; bimonthly, from Chris Couch, (college address) 402 John Jay, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027 (permanent address: Route 2, Box 889, Arnold, Mo. 63010); 24 pp. each, mimeographed.

Ray Nelson's "The Then People," in *Cipher* #5, is the best article to appear in any recent fanzine. That's a pretty dangerous statement to make, but I'll make it, although I know that a difference of taste might make you feel I'm crazy. "The Then People" is about fandom, and about the way people live, and about Ray Nelson. "A Then Person," says Ray, "is interested in the past and future, and has a gut feeling that the present is the outcome of the past and the beginning of the future. If anything, it is the present that seems a little unreal to him. He wonders, sometimes, just how big the present is. Is it a day . . . today of course . . . or is it an hour, or a minute, or a second, or a microsecond? When you look at the 'Now' it has a way of getting smaller and smaller until you begin to wonder if it's really there at all.

"Whoops! I had a moment of panic there, but I feel better now."

Science fiction fans are Then People, according to Ray, and this accounts for the way our fascination with nostalgia is almost as strong as our fascination with the future. Everything in the article relates more-or-less to this central idea, although the relationship gets a little tenuous in some of the digressions into fan history and childhood memories. But it all hangs together. Ray Nelson, I am sure, is one of the world's Holy Fools, and it's wonderful that he should be a fan as well. His ideas, taken at face value, are often bizarre, and his stories about himself seem too much larger-than-life to be true—"How could he really do all those things?" you ask—yet at age 40 Ray Nelson still takes on life with such childlike enthusiasm that you have to believe everything he says is true. It isn't that it's farfetched, it's just the way Ray tells it to you; he makes everything seem a little bit fabulous.

And so it is, when you're reading a Ray Nelson article.

The article is enhanced by three marvelous cartoons by Steve Stiles, who has been contributing some outstanding work to fanzines lately. These are finely-worked cartoons, and Steve has a touch for the absurdly funny line that never fails. I wonder if he chuckled, giggled, and then roared with laughter as he drew these cartoons? I can't imagine how he couldn't have.

This fanzine, *Cipher*, which printed such a fine article, is a good fanzine. It was a good fanzine before the current issue, but now it is raised to excellence by Nelson & Stiles. But don't let this eclipse the rest of the fanzine.

*Cipher* is the fourth of the Brooklyn fanzines, but it maintains its independence from the others as Chris goes back to Missouri for vacations quite frequently. In addition to the interaction with the rest of Brooklyn fandom, there's a strong current reminiscent of the Missouri fanzines of 1968, which Chris helped to publish. This current shows up in discussions of current culture, sometimes



original and sometimes not, in both articles and letters. One of the best features of *Cipher* is a column, "Very Midsummer Madness," by Alice Sanvito, who is new to fandom but who brings with her a sensible head and an easy writing ability. Alice has been writing a lot of letters to other fanzines lately, mostly just relating odd incidents and relaying bits of amusing information, or making quiet, interesting observations on the fannish scene. This column is an expansion of those letters, allowing her the room to write for a while about one subject. In #4, she writes about Krishna freaks that she has known, and about how she got into fandom—and right there is the dichotomy that runs through all of *Cipher*. The next article in the issue is a light piece of fannishness by Arnie Katz. After that comes Jay Kinney writing about Jesus freaks, an article inspired by a discussion in an earlier issue. Serious discussions of current culture rest side-by-side with the small talk of fandom. Both have been low-key, nice but not terrifically significant, but they haven't blended together yet. If they do, *Cipher* could become an excellent fanzine.

I must note in passing that Chris is doing some crisp, attractive layouts in his fanzine, especially in the latest issue. As long as he can get stuff like Nelson's article, *Cipher* must be *Highly Recommended*.

ENERGUMEN #9-10, Sept. & Dec., 1971; 50¢ (no checks or US stamps); quarterly, from Mike & Susan Glicksohn, 32 Maynard Ave. #205, Toronto 156, Ontario, CANADA; 54 & 52 pp. respectively, mimeographed.

From being a remarkably literate, well-put-together new fanzine a couple of years ago, *Energumen* has gone on to become a mainstay of modern fandom. I guess this is vindication of the faith that if you produce something good, people will notice and climb on the bandwagon. Every couple of months, now—much more frequently than

its theoretical quarterly schedule—this thick, yellow-papered Canadian fanzine with lots of electrostenciled artwork in its pages arrives in the mail. It is a handsome fanzine, although it's surprising that with such an emphasis on art there is very little originality in layout. There is a corresponding situation in the written material, but the process that brought it to this point is more complicated.

When I reviewed *Energumen* #2, in 1970, I said it was "a fanzine with some real intellectual meat." Very little of that remains. What has happened is that the fanzine, and the revived Canadian fandom behind it, have attracted the attention of much of fandom; the energies of a lot of fans started running through *Energumen*. The material now *flows* more, but it's less solid. To be sure, there is a high level of readability in this fanzine, a level that only two articles in these two issues fall below (a book review by Leon Taylor and an article about book reviewing by Rick Stooker; but why should *any* article fall below this level?). The level of ideas, however, is much lower; the intellectual stimulation present in that second issue is largely lacking now.

I'm being too harsh in my generalization. There is excellent written material in these two issues, and material of great variety: a funny tale of getting to a convention by Ginjer Buchanan, a personal column about Elmer Perdue and the idea of "fannish" vs. "sercon" by Ted White, an intelligent interview with Robert Silverberg, etc. Variety is *Energumen's* strength; Mike makes jokes about "fence-straddling" between fannish factions, but his job is much harder in Toronto than it would be in a British or Australian fanzine. US fandom has a remarkable proclivity for dividing into factions and yelling at itself. A little of this has slopped over into *Energumen*, but mostly it's a nice, fun fanzine that you want to write a letter to. The regular columns by Mike, Susan and Rosemary Ulyot (who is a good reporter of strange conversations) give the



mag a lightly but distinctly Canadian flavor, and the rest of the material seems to depend essentially on what people want to say in *Energumen*.

I told Mike recently in a letter that I felt the fanzine had stopped developing, and he didn't know what I meant. There seems to be little change in *Energumen*, outside of the changing mix of articles and art in each issue. The only goal Mike and Susan seem to have is to produce more issues like the ones they've already done. This is perfectly fine, but it surprises me; in most cases, when a fan editor starts doing the same thing over and over, it begins to pall, and he soon either changes what he's doing or stops publishing altogether. There are editors who are content with being steady and reliable, however; I just don't understand them.

But as long as the Glicksohns are steadily producing issues of *Energumen*, you should get those issues. *Highly Recommended*.

My little end-of-the-review notes are becoming superfluous; every fanzine I've reviewed this time has merited a "Highly Recommended." Perhaps I'm getting to be a forgiving reviewer. More likely it's a reflection of the large number of good fanzines appearing today.

#### *Other Fanzines:*

The fanzines marked with an asterisk (\*) are especially recommended.

\*FANGLE #1, Fall, 1971; 35¢; semi-quarterly, from Ross Chamberlain, 50 East First St., New York, NY 10003; 20 pp., mimeographed.

\*BEARDMUTTERINGS #1, Oct., 1971; "One free copy is available to anyone anywhere in the world on request," but after that only available for written response; irregular, from Rich Brown, 410 61st St., Apt. D4, Brooklyn, NY 11220; 12 pp., offset.

\*STARLING #19-21, July & Oct., 1971, & Jan., 1972; 50¢ or 3/\$1; quarterly, from Hank & Lesleigh Luttrell, 1108 Locust St.,

Columbia, Mo. 65201; 46, 34, & 34 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*BEABOHEMA #18-20, Fall & Winter, 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Frank Lunney, 212 Juniper St., Quakertown, Pa. 18951; 36, 36, & 24 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*GRANFALLOON #14, Nov., 1971; 60¢, 4/\$2; irregular, from Linda and Ron Bushyager, 111 MacDade Blvd., Apt. B211—Sutton Arms Apts., Folsom, Pa. 19033; 56 pp., mimeographed.

\*ASPIDISTRA #3, Oct., 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Susan Glicksohn, 32 Maynard Ave., Apt. 205, Toronto 156, Ontario, CANADA; 55 pp., mimeographed. Originally conceived as an ecology fanzine, now branching out as well.

\*MOTA #1-4, July, Oct., Nov., 1971, & Feb., 1972; 25¢; bimonthly, from Terry Hughes, 407 College Ave., Columbia, Mo. 65201; 18, 30, 34, & 28 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*THE HOG ON ICE #1, Dec., 1971; 25¢; irregular, from Creath Thorne, 1022 College Ave., Columbia, Mo. 65201; 16 pp., mimeographed.

\*SPECULATION #29, Oct., 1971, 50¢ or 4/\$2; irregular, from Peter R. Weston, 31 Pinewall Ave., Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, ENGLAND; 56 pp., mimeographed. The best fanzine devoted exclusively to science fiction.

\*SFCOMMENTARY #20-2 & 24, April, May, July, & Nov., 1971; 9/\$3 surface mail, 9/\$8 airmail; irregular, from Bruce R. Gillespie, GPO Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, AUSTRALIA (USAgents: Charlie & Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457); 52, 50, 50, & 50 pp., respectively, mimeographed. The second-best fanzine devoted to sf.

\*LIZARD INN #2, Nov., 1971; 60¢; irregular, from Dan Steffan, Woodfield Road, Gazenovia, NY 13035; 26 pp., offset.

\*AFAN #1-2, Summer & Fall, 1971; not available for money; irregular, from David Hulvey, Rt. 1, Box 198, Harrisonburg, Va.



22801; 32 & 44 pp., respectively, mimeographed.

\*WHO PUT THE BOMP #7-8, Summer & Fall-Winter, 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Greg Shaw, 64 Taylor Dr., Fairfax, Calif. 94930; 32 & 100 pp., respectively, one offset & one mimeographed. The leading rock-&-roll fanzine.

STANLEY #6 & 8, no date; no price, either; triweekly, from Stephen Goble, PO Box 4606, College Station, Tx. 77840; 4 & 6 pp., respectively, offset. I know #7 is around here someplace. . .

\*CHECKPOINT #10-1, 13-4, Oct., Nov., Dec., 1971, & Jan., 1972; 6/\$1; approx. biweekly, from Peter Roberts, The Hawthorns, Keele, Staffs., ENGLAND (US Agents: Charlie & Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457); 4 pp. each, plus inserts. The newszine for British fandom.

\*LOCUS 99-107, Oct., 1971, thru Feb., 1972; 12/\$3; 12/\$6; biweekly, from Charlie & Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY 10457; 6, 14, 8, 8, 18, 8, 6, 8, & 6 pp., respectively, plus inserts, mimeographed. The leading newszine in American fandom.

UNMITIGATED BARF #1, Feb., 1972; no price listed; irregular, from CAPCON, Capitol District SF Fan Federation, Box 801, Albany, NY 12201; 10 pp., mimeographed.

STARWORLDS #1, Nov., 1971; 30¢ or 4/\$1; "published periodically," from Verne F. O'Brian, 1320 Arthur Ave., Las Vegas, Nev. 89101; 34 pp., mimeographed.

PHANTASMICOM #8, Dec., 1971; 75¢ or 3/\$2; quarterly, from Donald G. Keller, 1702 Meadow Court, Baltimore, Md. 21207; 92 pp., mimeographed.

SANDERS #13, Dec., 1971; 4/\$1, 9/\$2, or 15/\$3; irregular, from Dave Nee, 977 Kains, Albany, Calif. 94706; 4 pp., offset. A West Coast newszine.

IRRATIONAL #3, Fall, 1971; 35¢; quarterly, from Rick Stooker, 1205 Logan St., Alton, Ill. 62002; 36 pp., offset.

NOSTALGIA NEWS #11-2, no dates; 6/

\$1.50 (make checks payable to Nostalgia News); irregular, from Larry Herndon, PO Box 34305, Dallas, Tx. 75234; 24 pp. each, mimeographed. Mostly ads, with a huge circulation (formerly the DALLASCON BULLETIN).

GREEN DRAGON #12, Dec., 1971; free to members, 10¢ for others; irregular, from Tolkien Society of America, Belknap College, Center Harbor, NH 03226 (Ed Meskys, editor); 2 pp., mimeographed. Newsletter of the TSA.

SANDWORM #15, Fall, 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Bob Vardeman, PO Box 11352, Albuquerque, NM 87112; 34 pp., mimeographed. Also included are two supplements, THE CRAZED WIZARD'S GIFT, 10 pp., and BUBONICON!, 6 pp., both of which are convention reports by Bob.

ANTARES #1, Oct., 1971; no price listed; irregular, from Sezar Erkin Ergin, Namik Kemal mah. I. cad. No. 16/5, Bakanliklar, Ankara, TURKEY; 18 pp., mimeographed. Half in English, half in Turkish, this is the first Turkish fanzine.

GODFREY DANIEL #1, Winter, 1971; 4/\$1; irregular, from Jim Turner, 1501 Rosemary Lane, Columbia, Mo. 65201; 20 pp., mimeographed.

KRATOPHANY #1, Dec., 1971; 50¢; irregular, from Eli Cohen, 417 W. 118th St., Apt. 63, New York, NY 10027; 28 pp., mimeographed.

BURGER #1, Oct., 1971; not available for money; irregular, from Ed Smith, 1315 Lexington Ave., Charlotte, NC 28203; 20 pp., mimeographed.

\*OUTWORLDS 3.1, Jan., 1972; 60¢; irregular, from Bill Bowers Box 87, Barberton, Ohio 44203; 24 pp., mimeographed.

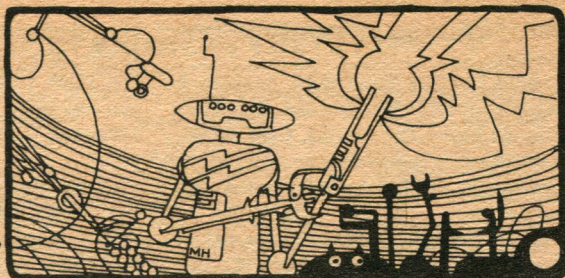
ASH-WING #9, Dec., 1971; no price listed; irregular, from Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. SW, Seattle, Wash. 98166; 54 pp., mimeographed.

MOEBIUS TRIP #11, Dec., 1971; 50¢ or 5/\$2; irregular, from Edward C. Connor, 1805 N. Gale, Peoria, Ill. 61604; 52 pp.,

(Continued on page 128)



# ...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on just one side of each sheet, and addressed to: *Or So You Say*, P.O. Box 409, Falls Church, Va. 22046.

Dear Mr. White:

I have not been reading SF magazines for long, but so far, my choice is *AMAZING*. The November and January covers were excellent, and I bought them the minute I saw them. Perhaps you can clear up a few points, though. In the November issue, on the cover, Terry Carr's (marvelous) short story was listed as "In His Image," while inside it was "In Man's Image." Which is the original? Also, as a writer yourself, why does the use of profanity enhance Carr's short story, while detracting from Brunner's long (and boring, in my opinion) novel, "The Wrong End of Time"? I really enjoyed "To End All Wars," by Gordon Eklund, and it prompted me to open up *World's Best SF '71* (which contains two *AMAZING* stories, by the way) and re-read Eklund's first short story, "Dear Aunt Annie." The style of writing in the two stories for me seemed to be totally different, proving, I suppose, the vastly varied talents of Mr. Eklund. All in all, the fabulous stories in the November and January *AMAZINGS* (excluding Mr. Brunner's effort) points to the fact that your editing skills far surpass your writing skills. (If "Christopher Street" is not a fair example of your writing, I retract the comment.) Your magazine is a good one,

and you shall have my subscription shortly.

KEN GAMMAGE JR.  
Box 222  
La Jolla, Ca. 92037

*I was wondering if anyone would notice the differences in the title of Carr's story. . . . His original title was "In Man's Image," and thus the manuscript was titled, as well as the contents page listing as I gave it to the publisher. In subsequent conversation, Terry and I agreed that "In His Image" (which was Greg Benford's suggestion, by the way) was a slight improvement, and when I did the cover type, I used it. Unfortunately, the title change never made it inside the covers. My apologies. —TW*

Dear Ted:

Hmmm. Seems as if you must have had a shortage of letters this time around—after all, my writing isn't all *that* interesting to make it worthwhile to publish two long letters in the same issue!

I see I just got through praising Terry's efforts with the Ace Specials [*in his letter to FANTASTIC*] and you bring it up again here. Well. Frankly, I think that in the future, when it comes to accounting major movements in the field over the past couple of decades, Terry's work will be ranked among the most important developments, perhaps right along with the growth of the original paperback anthology, as we've discussed



before. The number of authors Terry has introduced in this country, the number he has brought to prominence in the field, the number he has virtually *made* major names—just incredible to behold. Just go through the list, and you come across many of the most important and influential writers active in the field. Ursula K. LeGuin—who had several novels published, but only made her reputation with her two Ace Specials. R. A. Lafferty—again, a couple of novels and a spate of short stories gained no attention, but his two Ace Specials and his Special collection made him respected and highly sought after. D. G. Compton, first introduced in this country through Terry's series. Joanna Russ, whose first extended and reputation-making works were Ace Specials. Bob Shaw's first novels to receive any notice. And how many more could you name? Then it all came down to finances, didn't it? Sad.

Not that I want to make a big thing of this, but David Cook's page 29 illo for the Brunner novel here isn't exactly a masterpiece.

Tell me, Ted—did *you* enjoy *Solaris*? I'm inclined to think by this very favorable review here that you must have, and by this time I'm wondering if it's me, rather than the novel. I was left very unsatisfied by it; after reading rave after rave, I'm more inclined to agree with Bob Silverberg's comment in one issue of *SFC*—"a mess"—than with the raves. Certainly there are some excellent points about the novel, some fine psychological and philosophical probings. But I found all too much of the writing impenetrable; whether the fault of the translators or not, I had to force myself through many sections. And I felt large doses of the philosophy were very poorly integrated in the body of the novel; it seems as if Lem simply forgot his story, and presented his admittedly-interesting ideas on the subject at hand. The excuse given is that most of these sections were excerpts from works the protagonist reads, but this was

not sufficient. The material wasn't at all emotionally involving; it was intellectually interesting, but read like the dry analysis it was supposed to be. Lem either couldn't or didn't choose to integrate this material into the storyline; he didn't make any particular attempts (or didn't make them noticeable) to make them interesting in and of themselves, either. In all Lem's—and his chief agent, Franz Rottensteiner's—published statements of contempt for American science fiction writers of the Robert Heinlein mold, they've perhaps missed a vital point. Heinlein, whatever you may think about his ideas and philosophies, was a master of presenting this material as a basic part of his novels. You found yourself accepting and almost agreeing with his characters, even though you may personally abhor the philosophy behind it all. Lem, for all his philosophical depth, rarely involved at least this reader in his musings.

I don't think you've articulated a specific intention to *not* stick to specific cover formats prior to this issue; you do that in answering some of my comments, and for myself, I agree with you entirely. As long as the logo remains standard and easily noticeable, I can't see that varying cover designs from issue to issue can possibly hurt the magazine, and certainly can help. By keeping the logo standard, you assure that the regular reader can always find the magazine on the stands; by varying the rest of the cover design, you're able to appeal to the casual reader at a little different level each time around—which seems to me one of your basic objectives. Seems another excellent idea.

Ah, well. I see by the latest *Locus* that sales have gone down again, despite continued improvements in the magazines. It's easy to see why—even in a major New York city like Rochester, I find it difficult if not impossible to find AMAZING and FANTASTIC consistently. Sad indeed.



JERRY LAPIDUS  
54 Clearview Drive  
Pittsford, N.Y. 14534

*I try to give every reader who has something to say space in this column. Your letter on the May and July issues was mislaid earlier, but I thought it sufficiently worth publishing to use in the January issue, along with your next letter. I suppose this might be a good place to point out to the rest of you that the continued appearance here of "regulars" in the letters column is due to one simple fact—they write consistently publishable letters. My criteria for publishability are these: the letter asks questions worthy of public answer; the letter offers information of value to the readership; the letter represents a point of view which deserves publication (such as those letters, last issue, of Daniel Backrak and Gwen Cunningham) although perhaps in opposition to my own; or the letter is of interest for the commentary offered on the stories, features or other letters. The purpose here is communication—between you and me and between each of you as well. This is also why letters which simply shower praise upon me or the magazines, welcome though I find them, rarely find their way into print—they just aren't of enough interest to anyone but myself. While the inner circles of the sf community find plenty of room for communication in the pages of fanzines, the letters columns of the professional sf magazines are the only way in which the general sf readership can join in. That's what they are here for, and I'd like to see even more of you making use of them. Consider that an invitation.*

*To return to your letter, Jerry, I'm afraid that my view of Solaris is closer to yours than that of our reviewer; I found myself reluctant to return to the book each time I put it down, and I still have not finished it. The report in Locus is based on the circulation figures given in our annual Statement of Ownership, required by the Postal Service. These figures reflect the figures given us by our distributor, and are about six months behind (it takes*

*that long to get the "final" figures, but sometimes "late" returns come in even later yet)—that is, this, the July issue, should go on sale in early May, but we won't know how well it sold until around November. The Statement was filed October 1, 1971, and reflects sales only through the spring of last year—at a time when you may recall I was unhappy with the sales picture myself. However, the downward slide seems to have bottomed out and we have hopes for a better 1972.*

—TW

Dear Ted:

Having been a Science Fiction enthusiast for several years now, I should like to make an observation about some of the so called "New Wave" writers and reviewers. This observation involves their tendency to criticize certain authors, Robert Heinlein in particular, because of their political and social convictions, without regard to the quality of writing or content of the story. To complicate matters more, many of these same authors parade their own political or social ideas as being 'right.'

Sam Lundwall's otherwise excellent book, *Science Fiction: What It's All About*, falls victim to this. To quote: "Heinlein is a man who believes in strict norms, God and Country, but above everything else in Holy Individualism. Socialism is worse than death and must be fought at all costs." This indicates that Lundwall sympathizes with socialism or socialist causes. To quote again: "*The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*" describes a moon colony where most of our accepted norms are outdated, and where the war cry is, 'There ain't no such thing as free lunch' (Tanstaaf!). The moon colony honors absolute freedom, the right to do whatever he wants and to hell with the weaker ones or poorer ones. The novel gives a terrifying picture now propagandized by, among others, the U.S. demagogue Ayn Rand." Many people consider *MIAHM* his best novel and it was received favorably by the



reviewers (James Blish most notably), yet he discredits the entire book because it's libertarian stand disagrees with his socialist ideas. This is inexcusable.

While these particular shortcomings are evident in many reviews and editorials, the most blatant one I have come across is a review by Joanna Russ in the December 1971 issue of *F&SF*. The book is *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone but before the review itself, she delivers a comparative stab at Heinlein. "Heinlein's family system in *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* is a patriarchal, patrilocal 'stem' family very like those of the middle ages, with the added feature of *droit du seigneur* for the men. None of this is new."

If you have read the review you know the book is a Socialist-Feminist dream which encompasses the destruction of practically every Western *moré*. Heinlein's book is, of course, a social extrapolation and whether you agree with his suppositions (I myself found several of these ideas repugnant) is irrelevant. From her statements she infers that these ideas are erroneous and generally untrustworthy. To quote again: "You will have a hard time with this book if you believe that Capitalism is God's way or that Manly competition is the law of the Universe—but then you can go back to reading *Skylark of Valeron* or whatever and forget about the *real future*."

Those two words indicate my total premise, that people have prejudices. From the quote you can assume that Miss Russ is a feminist and perhaps a socialist. In her own words she calls *The Dialectic of Sex* a "social extrapolation" and yet the words "real future" indicate that she believes this is how the future will be, more or less.

To get to the point of my whole letter, I believe that the one prerequisite for reviewing books is a sense of objectivity, the ability to criticize without allowing your own prejudices to cloud your judgment. Whether a reviewer feels the ideas of the book are

moral according to his standards is unimportant as far as I am concerned. The important duty is to determine if a book is well written and interesting; in short, readable. If a reviewer cannot study a book without injecting his own personal opinions, then it is best that he or she retire and become a politician. Please allow me to make my own moral judgments.

I consider the field of Science Fiction the most flexible form of literature in which to express your ideas. Let's not get paranoid about others' ideas.

I would like to thank you for allowing me a forum for my opinions.

JACK HARRIS  
315 West 23rd  
New York N.Y. 10011

*Until relatively recently the critical fraternity held to the myth of total objectivity, and critics handed down their judgments as if from Olympus. In the last ten or twenty years this view has changed to its polar opposite and critics have become almost totally subjective, submerging themselves in the material they review, experiencing it, and reporting their experiences and reactions. To the extent that a critic makes the reader aware of his biases in advance, this is probably the more honest course, since to pretend omniscience—which would be required, along with a total emotional divorce from the object under review, for true objectivity—is dishonest. In the end a good critic is good to the extent that he or she can buttress his subjective reactions with an objective set of criteria and communicate the whole to his readers. By my standards, Miss Russ (perhaps she would prefer Ms. Russ) is one of the best of the current crop of critics working in science fiction. I may not always agree with her opinions, but I admire her precision of language and acuteness of insight. (I only wish she wrote for us!) I know she reads this magazine; perhaps she'll reply to your letter in a forthcoming issue. —TW*



Dear Ted,

I recently read in *Locus* that the reprints are being dropped. Thank God and Sol Cohen. But still, it is a pity that we couldn't go on with one good reprint every other issue or so. If only the reprints you had run hadn't been such dogs. Oh well, just don't try to cop out by increasing the size of the type or going down to 110 pages. Please?

The best story in the January *AMAZING* was Richard Lupoff's "The Heyworth Fragment." You are right, the story is quite haunting; it doesn't get to you (or perhaps I should say it didn't get to me) until a minute or two after reading, but the story *does* get to you. This story is far superior to any of Lupoff's humorous sf, and if it doesn't get a Hugo nomination, it should at least be thought of as the best short story of volume 45 of *AMAZING*.

None of the other stories do quite as well. "Commuter Special" was ok; I think it would be more effective as a film for television. I have a bad habit of visualizing the commuters as being done away by fire instead of gas; a big, loud, powerful blast of flame coming from an oversized nozzle, followed by a long shot of the commuter car with the interior completely filled with flame. This is not good sf, I know; it is too expensive and too frightening for the circumstances that Peck gives us. But the idea of that being done in a film fascinates me.

About the only reason I could see for reprinting "The Man Who Lived Next Week," as far as I could guess, was in order that there be something for your own story to be worse than. I'm sorry Ted, but I just can't appreciate your fiction. Perhaps I'm not being fair; I've only read 4 short stories by you and nothing else. But in all 4 of these stories, you make life so dreadfully miserable that I can't see any reason that the characters would want to go on with it. I also noticed a certain lack of plot, like you were setting the scene for a novel instead of writing a short story.

"The Wrong End Of Time" was good but

flawed. The whole wrong end of time theory doesn't really have much to back it up, and it wasn't really till the end of the novel that I was convinced that the USA could go to pot in the manner Brunner described. Then, I also found in the novel characters that were there but had no purpose; I don't know if Brunner was just giving us examples of how rotten the USA was, or if he was just trying to pad out the novel.

JIM MEADOWS III

62 Hemlock St.

Park Forest, Ill. 60466

The art was not too good this issue. The cover was rather trite, and the lighting was done so that the fibers of the canvas showed up on the left side. The interior illustrations were a bit uninteresting, except for Mike Kaluta's drawing for "The Heyworth Fragment." None of the artists seem to do well at one column drawings. Why don't you try some full page ones?

To close the letter, since it's near Christmas, perhaps for next year, you might get Ed Emsh to do one of those delightfully bizarre Santa Claus covers that he used to do for *Galaxy*.

*The typesize is a little larger—10 point instead of 9 for the stories; 9 point instead of 8 for the features—but we haven't cut back our pages. Satisfied? The fibers of the canvas in the cover painting were supposed to show—they were used for texture. As for full-page illos, how about Mike Hinge's? Finally, an Emsh cover? We'd love one—on any topic—but Ed is far more involved with movie-making these years and his sf cover appearances have been quite restricted.* —TW

Ted,

Why are not the circulation figures of all science fiction mags over one hundred thousand?

Is it that the publishers don't want to sell the copies they print? Are they hoarding them in hopes of some future market?

Is it because people do not want to read good fiction?



Is it that science fiction mags don't print good fiction?

The answer to all above is no. The three are the wrong questions.

Publishers want to sell every copy they print and more if possible. For one, that is their nature, but more importantly, that is the way they make money—the root of all greed.

People do want to read good fiction at the right price.

Published each month in the science fiction mags are the most consistently good selections of fiction on the market—many worth far more than the authors are paid for them.

So back we go to the original question. It is a correct question and not as many have suggested, insolvable.

The answer: science fiction mags have failed to adapt to the times. The genre first acquired a periodic market during the depression when people were looking for something to do between a rock and a hard spot. Science fiction rocketed them out of the misery of the world around them—away from the soup lines which stretched around the corner and up the next block. Thousands of issues sold to people wanting something, anything, to read and who saw in the covers escape.

A great many of these people are still around, but only a handful still buy the mags. Why? They might just associate those far out covers with the close to home reality of the depression.

What they are buying now is reality. If you want to sell them something else, I suggest you find a short soup line. But most science fiction mags are selling reality, inside the covers, so why aren't they reaching people.

It has been suggested, a science fiction mag named *True Confessions* with JKO's picture on the cover would sell faster than the presses could print them. The idea may be hard to take, but it is true. That is the

kind of thing people want to see; it is not the product science fiction is intended to produce. A lesson can still be learned.

If science fiction mags would change their names, face lift their covers, and try to get the eyes of those not looking for science fiction, their circulation levels would rise. A great number of the new readers might be one-timers, but some would find they like what they read and never have any idea it was science fiction.

Have you any idea of the people "science fiction" alienates?

Obviously the publishers don't. You, Ted, are planning to make it even bigger on our cover. Already, it is so big it scares the distributor into hiding it between Hitchcock and Science Digest. It scares the prospective buyer who must plunk down the baby's milk money and fear what the clerk will think of a grown man buying science fiction—Oh! and that cover. Most people still think of science fiction in the same breath with Buck Rodgers and Flashie Baby.

Do you know why so many sf fans are into the costume bit—black capes, wide brim hats and even swords? That's what they wear to buy the latest issues.

Inside, between the covers is the heart of the magazine, but at most news stands the man gives you a funny look if you stand too long over an open mag so most people give a prospective buy a few brief flick throughs before making up their minds. So when they flick through a science fiction mag, what do they see? Miles of gray, long stretches of type which obviously is too much to read for pleasure.

When they flick through the pages of a major publication, what do they see? They see bright advertisements and the more the better the magazine to them. If you don't believe this is their assumption, then you had better not work for HMH Publishing, my friend, or you will find you've had your nose in the fold-out too long.

Good, eye catching, non-illusion covers



which suggest current interest, readable stories, solid commentary and advertisements make a magazine. Science fiction mags have two; they need the other two.

And what about the regular reader? What harm will be done him by such changes? The fiction will still be there. If the science fiction mags had some more money to build with there might be even more and better stories. Also there would be some security.

If science fiction mags keep dragging along behind the time they predicted and helped to shape, then very soon copies will be selling at two-fifty a lick and circulation levels will be comparable to certain of the lesser fanzines.

J. R. YEARWOOD  
2760 Sargent Ave.  
San Pablo, Ca. 94806

*In other words, if we turned AMAZING STORIES into Playboy, we could pick up a lot of new readers! I think you miss the point entirely, J.R.—you want to fool prospective purchasers; you want to trick them into buying our magazine. But what makes you think they'd find us to their liking, once they actually read past the phoney cover you propose? Don't you think the average newsstand browser and magazine reader can tell science fiction from the non-sf? You seem to have a remarkably low opinion of this reader's intelligence—even while you ask of him that he appreciate fiction which requires some intelligence to be understood (and imagination, to be enjoyed). Nope and uh-uh. I believe in an honest package. Our readership today is no more familiar with the Depression of the thirties than I suspect you are—over 50% of our readers are under thirty. And what they are looking for here is what they cannot find in those magazines with the glossy advertisements for conspicuous consumption and technological waste. To be quite frank with you, we could very easily sell over 100,000 copies of this magazine—if our distributor would agree to handle that many copies and to put them on display. In the mid-forties,*

*this magazine, while at its lowest ebb in terms of the quality of fiction it was publishing, sold well over 200,000 copies! But right now we have more prospective readers looking for copies of this magazine than we can get put on sale—see the letter from Jerry Lapidus, this issue, for an example. The best (or most appealing) packages in the world will do no good for as long as we cannot gain the necessary display space in the marketplace.. —TW*

Dear Ted:

I'm quite pleased that you decided to review the Firesign Theatre album in the section normally reserved for raps on books. The Firesign Theatre needs the exposure a review in a major SF prozine can supply so that voters for the Hugo Dramatic category will at least be able to consider this superb work. I fear that lack of sufficient voter identification caused *Don't Crush that Dwarf* to lose over its lackluster competition in last year's race. *Bozos* is a superior work of imagination, with very laudable virtues, most of which you pointed out. However, the movie *A Clockwork Orange* may defeat the Firesign Theatre this time because a movie, even one such as *A Clockwork Orange*, is traditional Dramatic category fare. And, the movie is also a fine work of imagination. Burgess should be proud of what they've done to his novel. So, though I think it was rather unfortunate the Firesign Theatre didn't get the award they deserved last year, simply because, I feel, there aren't enough freaks in fandom, and some of the more conservative elements in fandom condemned the record as full of obvious drug references and little else, the Burgess motion picture looks very strong in competition with *Bozos*.

Further, some fans have voiced the opinion that the ending is a cop-out (a feeling I don't share). They say the last "scene" in the wagon made the whole album seem "like a dream." However, the fantasy element, though it adds a certain dreamlike quality



to Clem's tale, isn't so much a cop-out, especially after listening to the album a lot. The concept of a newer reality has reached a higher plane in *Bozos*. *Don't Crush that Dwarf* dealt with the protagonist breaking free of his artificial fantasies, but not on quite the level of *Bozos*.

There is another aspect of your review of *Bozos* which I'm glad to see. That is, the mention of the surrealist qualities of the group. For me, this is what first caught my attention about what they were doing. I've, for quite a time, been interested in surrealism. Unfortunately, most SF done along surreal lines has struck me as being somewhat derivative, stilted and not following the best lines in the surreal tradition (and there is a surreal tradition—anti-tradition). Not that the painters, who stirred up the artistic world of the 20s, were so much anti-traditional for its own sake (later, some of the less talented imitators were, making up for lack of creativity with unthinking adherence to forms and constructs) but there is a vitality in surrealism that demands being artistically revolutionary, if not so in other spheres such as politics and religion (but it's not safe to bet on any kind of conformity from many who are actively involved in creating surreal artforms).

Since 1924, and the first Surrealist Manifesto, many of surrealism's critics have, from time to time, cited its extinction due to various social conditions, the artistic climate, etc. They have never been entirely correct. Always, even when it seems that surreal innovation is at an end, some new creative force introduces new energy into the realm of the ultimate in unfettered imagination. To many, the Firesign theatre, and surrealists in general, may seem to be the negation of "Common Sense" and proper booswhah artistic sensibility, but this is a very superficial judgment. The Firesign Theatre are multifaceted, and many-leveled in their reality constructs, in their appeals to the imagination of the listener, and even in their

intricately plotted punnery. In the past, surrealists have literally declared war on artistic and social conventions, casting their lot with the downtrodden and oppressed. It is no surprise, then, that the Firesign Theatre finds its most sympathetic listeners among the new bohemians, the avant-garde, and, yes, SF fans.

Its to the point that many fans engage in Firesign Theaterisms. Terry Hughes does it to strange passersby in Missouri, I do it to the consternation of many in the Harrisonburg area, and others in fandom use it. Simply, to engage in conversations loudly improvised from the four albums they've done so far. It can be a very interesting experience. At school, the freaks sometimes compete to see who can carry on a sentence, a paragraph or more from a Firesign Theatre improvisation the longest, and most creatively. It can pass time otherwise spent dully in studying or sleeping in the dorms.

Curiously enough, *Arsenal* (a so-called journal of Surrealist Subversion) lists among its immediate tasks the "total mobilization of all resources of humor." I'm afraid *Arsenal* is much more rhetorical and dogmatic than creative. Yet, the Firesign Theatre has mobilized humor in some of the best science fictional social satire in some time. I hope their fifth album, whenever it's issued, continues their probing of the surrealist and the sfnal.

Of the stories, I wonder who is left to satire after bureaucrats, technocrats, capitalists etc in F. M. Busby's story? Change the title to "Of Mice and Fen" and he could've written about an eccentric SF fan who invented mimeos you could put paper into—and, and, surprise! it would come out the other side with cryptic desings in ink on it. Such designs to be analyzed by psychologists and those who get a vicarious thrill from sniffing dried ink stains. Or about a new communications company run by Jesus Christ and the 12 Collators or somesuch. Perhaps even a whimsical tale of 7 neofans on a pilgrimage



to Brooklyn to worship at the shrines of faanish myths, both past and present, chanting "FAPA FAPA FAPA" and waving their copies of the Enchanted Duplicator at Unbelievers. Ah.

Alexei & Cory Panshin's humorous bit was nice. When I think of the time and effort Alexei Panshin has said in fanzines that it takes him to write stories, I begin to realize how much it took to write even this short story. The flashy little poeticisms seem to be an obvious part of Cory Panshin's contribution to this story. The story fits the very fine cover painting well. It seems the kind of special quirky word-trip Bode would be into if he'd taken the time to do it himself. Still the story is rather unique in a genre not noted for its lighthearted humor (and even that—far too often—runs into trouble when the writers overdo it). It wasn't cosmic, friends, but it was comic. And how do I know? Why I asked Ignatius Ofari when he was tap-dancing in Luna City. Incredible fellow, didn't even stop to hear Godot's presidential campaign speech. You remember the one? Yeah, he told the Moogtowners he'd Talk to His Nose, Talk to His Toes, and Talk to Bozos if he had to live in a Copper Plated Integrated Circuit too. Sheesh, no time for a Deep Pronouncement or an Utter Abstraction (capital letters are uplifting to one's self-esteem) 'cause I gotta join the toiletariat in glorious revulooshon down by the 1975 Auto Show. Just around the corner from More Science Fiction High. Tell 'em Naomi sent ya! And what about Naomi?

DAVE HULVEY  
Rt. 1, Box 198  
Harrisonburg, Va. 22801

*What, indeed?* —TW

Dear Ted,

Will you please stop printing pornography? Why, don't you know, that dirty-nasty pervert stuff will corrupt our good and righteous Puritan morals and leave the door

wide open for the Commies to squat and take over. I hope that doesn't sound too hard, but I really have to thumb my nose at those certain, very "moral" people who tell you and me that a story is bad if it mentions the word "fuck." I have to agree with your answer to Henry W. Harris and Geo. C. Brown: when so-called "decent" people stop using "gutter" words in their everyday conversations, we writers will stop using them in the attempt to present better, more realistic stories. Christ—I can't believe (yet do) the small mindedness of some people. In my opinion, everyone should be offended quite regularly. If they've any brains, they'll analyse their "offense," and nine out of ten times they'll realise how ridiculous that offense is. I do.

You have to be congratulated on the new packaging of both AMAZING and FANTASTIC. Superb! Stories and articles are printed on *much* better paper, and the new cover stock I like very much. I suspect the other prozines (save *Fantasy and Science Fiction*) will follow suit sooner or later. [*They have.* —TW] It makes for a much more durable product. Besides, I like the idea of a s-f 'zine being as attractive as some of the paperbacks I see on the local book racks. And, to boot, the stuff inside your two packages is, as a rule, vastly superior. From me, that's a compliment in the highest degree. Also, I find the change in the format of the table of contents very pleasing to the eyes. If I had never seen or read a copy of either AMAZING or FANTASTIC, the new table of contents format would *almost* be enough to compel me to buy a copy of one of the two.

On the cover, your new logo is attractive and modern—much better than the previous logo. And the enlarged "science fiction" following the logo makes it immediately obvious as to the nature of the contents of the magazine, if the cover doesn't. However, it has been my experience that such changes in format and presentation do not attract the non-sf reading public. If it did, those



people such changes attract would already be reading sf or fantasy, and wouldn't need certain changes to tell them what type of magazine they were looking at. The title, it seems to me, would be enough to tell them that. I mean, tell me now, what kind of magazine would use a title like "amazing" or "fantastic" *except* a fantasy of science fiction or fantasy magazine? I do like the changes though—they're improvements that I, as a reader and subscriber (for another year and a half, anyway) appreciate. Thanks for keeping us in mind.

I have a bitch to make about some of your covers, though. Specifically, I am referring to those covers done by John Pederson, Jr. They really turn me off, Ted. I see a primitive, unrealistic quality in them. Your January '72 issue, for example: one-man space craft zipping over what I assume to be the surface of the moon on huge rocket exhausts. The center ship even has streaks trailing off the wings to indicate speed. Come on, now, those wing trailings are used (or should be used) only to indicate the speed of an atmospheric flying craft. Not a craft designed to go where there is no atmosphere. But, minor flaw—it's not unforgivable. My basic point is, the January issue's cover was unconvincing and unrealistic to me. Have you thought of getting a Schoenherr or Freas cover? Since Ben Bova assumed editorship of *Analog*, I notice Schoenherr has resumed, after a rather lengthy absence, doing covers for the 'zine. Was it Bova, or the (unfortunately) late Campbell who purchased that cover? It is, like *AMAZING*, the January '72 issue. And let's have some more Jones' covers. That guy's stuff turns me on. Finally, what about Frazetta? The Science Fiction Book Club recently had two jacket designs done by him for two Burroughs' volumes: how about you? Or does the artist charge too high a price?

I hope I don't sound critical or factitious by asking these questions. I'm merely curious. Your two magazines are a part of

my life. I want them to be the best in the field. Package-wise, fiction-wise, and article-wise. *En toto*.

Speaking of fiction, the stuff in the November and January issues was really very good. Eklund's "To End All Wars" was a funny and ironic comedy/satire on diplomatic genuflections: "We're just playing a game, after all. So what if a bunch of people get killed in the process?" Remindful of the way the US-North Vietnamese-South Vietnamese "peace" conference has been going on. A veritable Theatre of the Absurd trip being played out before our very eyes—and no one, especially those who are able to, doing anything about it. And Macfarlane's "Road Factory" showed quite clearly what conformatism and dogma can do to ruin scientific inquisitiveness—or any inquisitiveness, for that matter. Brunner's "The Wrong End of Time" I considered a clever and well written story, but it left me singularly unimpressed. The man is capable of better. The Hinge cover was great.

In the January ish, Lupoff's story "The Heyworth Fragment" was an odd piece indeed. I don't think the full effect of the story is really felt until the comment is made: "All concerned may rest assured that the final disposition of the Heyworth fragment will be handled with the full wisdom and responsibility of our democratically chosen leaders." Like, who's running the US at the time this story takes place? I don't know about your story, though. It leaves me hanging in a few places. Specifically, why are the cops blowing everybody away and for what reason, and why should the National Guard be on their (Archer's) side? Aside from that, it was an interesting story.

A word about the *Amazing Classics*: in no sense of the word are these stories "classics." And—only by an extreme stretch of the imagination—they can be considered classics only in the sense that they serve as period pieces. Something to show what sf *used* to be like as opposed to what it is like



now. Other than that, they're a complete waste of space—space that *could* be used for short stories and/or articles. Finally, where's John D. Berry's *Clubhouse*? I've missed it, somewhere along the line. Like to see him out next edition.

So—that about wraps it up for me. I just want to say this last thing: undeniably, your two magazines have the best letter cols around. They provide the only viable forum of discussion for sf outside the fanzines.

GENE VAN TROYER

3107-B SE Stark

Portland, Or. 97214

*Most of the artists you mentioned are working, as you implied, for higher-paying markets. But in both quality and diversity I believe we need take the back seat to no one. We've published covers by Hinge, Pederson (whose January cover had, for me, a flair reminiscent of earlier years), Todd/ Bodé, Hinge and Todd/ Bodé on this and the four previous issues, and the next two issues will be Don Davis' spectacular debut to sf magazines. You'll find Jeff Jones on next month's FANTASTIC (the 20th Anniversary issue). As for the "classics," they're gone now—and The Clubhouse is back on a regular basis.—TW*

Dear Ted:

I'm sorry I have to be the bearer of ill tidings, but all copies of the January, '72 issue of AMAZING at the Readmore newsstand in downtown Springfield were miscollated. Instead of page 35, the contents page appears again and the front section of the book is repeated—then the rest of the book, from page 67 on, appears after page 34 is reached for the second time!

For this your printers should refund Sol Cohen's money! (If, Ghu forbid, *all* of the January issues of AMAZING were turned out this way!) [Yours is the only report I've heard.—TW]

In regard to your editorial in the January issue, I share your distaste for the recent words of wisdom from B.F. Skinner and Dr.

Kenneth Clark. I agree with you that all too many "professionals" and "authorities" can't see beyond their noses.

I refuse to believe that people are just flesh and blood robots whose computer-like brains slavishly and predictably respond to their surroundings, no matter what the learned Dr. Skinner says.

But Skinner's extreme environmental explanation of human behavior is only a theory, and is based more upon what has been learned from experiments with animals rather than upon what can be learned by observing actual human behavior.

A man's total environment is so gigantically complex that it's difficult to match up any single phase of his behavior with any single portion of his surroundings. The environment in which a lab experiment in the physical sciences takes place can be rigidly controlled, but you can't totally control a man's environment—you can lock him in a dark padded cell, but part of his environment is already locked inside his brain, and you have no way of knowing what all is in there.

I maintain that it is beyond the ability of science today to predict with any measure of reliability even the simplest types of human behavior in an individual. There are just too many environmental factors to be considered in determining which produced specific actions in people.

And because environmental factors are so numerous and complex, much of what happens to people just seems to happen at random. The factors involved in producing the design of an individual snowflake are so complex and varied that no two of them are alike. Can man ever achieve the God-like power of predicting the design of a snowflake? Or a newborn baby's fingerprints?

I think it is likely that a total ability to explain and predict an individual's behavior may forever elude man's ability to discover, and thus Dr. Skinner's theory would never become a natural law.



However, because science is by its very nature a cause and effect means of studying the environment, I think Dr. Skinner is right in saying this is the best scientific way to study human behavior.

I do not agree, however, that environmental factors are all that determines human behavior. Dr. Skinner perhaps doesn't appreciate the fact that parapsychology was admitted as a new scientific discipline by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at its 1970 meeting in Chicago. Skinner's materialistic view of man just doesn't consider that ESP and PSI powers exist. But I believe that J.B. Rhine and other parapsychologists have proven that "extra environmental" factors can profoundly influence human behavior.

Thanks to ESP and PSI, and researchers like Dr. Rhine, I don't think Dr. Skinner is going to get very far in trying to rob us of our freedom and dignity!

WILLIAM D. CONNER  
1711 Providence Avenue  
Springfield, Ohio 45503

*The trouble with testing animals in a rigidly controlled laboratory is that in many cases—especially those involving behavior—about all you can find out is how the animal will perform in the lab. Only within the last dozen years have researchers begun serious study of animal behavior under natural conditions—in the animal's own environment.—TW*

Dear Ted White:

Congratulations. You've finally done away with reprints, and you have turned AMAZING into a first rate magazine.

In the March issue, "Project XX" was very interesting and it was good to see a story written from a woman's point of view. The story has a great insight to the problems plaguing us now with the government's classification practices. Most Classified materials are labeled as such to prevent personal embarrassment from blunders rendered. We all

know that such materials should be de-classified.

But one thing disturbs me, and that is: Does Miss De Ford condone the violent inborn hostility of Asta?

In "Only The Stars Are Real" the title is very appropriate, for the story seems to be a fantasy dream set in reality by Alan W. Stewart. He has put himself in the hero's place and battles the forces of evil. Or the persecution forces of a dream. But none the less I thoroughly enjoyed this story, because he did keep his characters consistent, something that rarely happens in dreams or sf stories.

I am glad to see many many more good sf movies on television (ABC Weekend Movie) and *Clockwork Orange*; the adaptation is supposed to be very well done.

Will an increased public awareness of sf change it for the better or for the worse? I suppose only time will tell.

BEN VECCHIO  
31 Woodland Drive  
East Islip, NY 11730

*Mass entertainments seem to be those which are the most accessible to the largest audience. To the extent that sf is presently less accessible to that audience than, say, Peyton Place, it will have to change if it wants a mass audience. I don't think I'd find such change appealing, but who am I to say?—TW*

Dear Ted,

I was rather disappointed with John Brunner's novel, "The Wrong End of Time." It seems such a routine, ordinary novel, while I was hoping for something more spectacular—along the lines of his *Stand on Zanzibar*. It has good moments, certainly, but that ending seems to be pulled right out of a hat. And some of that mumbo-jumbo dialog for "Josh, Shark, and Potatohead" was really bad—it was utterly meaningless. I don't mind jargon, but it should be decipherable—there's no point in putting a piece



of dialog in a story that nobody can understand.

Richard Lupoff's "The Heyworth Fragment" was *much* better—I found it quite an intriguing and inventive little item, rather like "The Great Nebraska Sea" in its flat, very matter-of-fact style. And that (oh so subtle) ending is just lovely—"all concerned may rest assured that the final disposition of the Heyworth Fragment will be handled with the full wisdom and responsibility of our democratically chosen leaders." I also get the impression, now that I'm thinking it over, that the story may have started out as a parody of some scientific document. "Commuter Special," by Richard Peck, is quite an involving little story—I found myself drawn into the protagonist's problem almost immediately. Unfortunately, I find the basic premise rather hard to swallow—certainly there are much easier and more efficient ways of population control than commuter trains fitted with gas nozzles. Also, wouldn't this be unfair on the men? I mean, generally more men work than women, so more would necessarily be commuters, and thus more on the average would be killed. This would also accelerate the growing difference between the population of males and females—there are already right now more females than males in the country, and if the type of population control Peck extrapolates were adopted, I'd expect to see quite an imbalance in the male-female population. Actually, it would seem a lot more effective to discriminate against the women, since they're the ones who have the babies—but perhaps this is only my male chauvinism coming to the surface! Still, despite the rather weak and unstable basic premise, it was nice to see a story flashed out in such involving human terms.

I was reading with alarm the sales figures in the Feb. *FANTASTIC*. The thing that kept coming to me was, "For God's sake raise your prices before it's too damn late!" I don't

know how closely you've examined your paperback racks lately, but the last time I looked I had a hard time finding anything under 75¢. And those few volumes marked 60¢ were mighty thin. But that's nothing—a 148pg edition of Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* cost me \$1.25. Playboy Press put out an equally thin volume of interviews for a staggering \$1.75 (though that *did* have a color insert in the middle of it). So I don't think it would be such an awful crime if you raised your price 15¢ . . . especially if you added some extra pages along with it. Actually, what I'd *really* like to see is a giant 95¢ *AMAZING*, with 200 pages and a complete novel in every issue. That strikes me as being a very competitive package, since the reader would get an entire novel plus all the features, short stories, artwork, etc., as a sort of bonus. As I've said (or at least implied) above, 95¢ isn't such an awful lot to pay for a magazine either, not with all the \$1.25 and above titles out which have much fewer pages in them. That's my opinion on the subject, anyway.

Regarding "Growing Up Fast in the City": I don't think Scott Edelstein meant that the story wasn't science fiction so much as it wasn't very good sf. I mean while the story was set in the near future, it also could have been set right now, or five or ten years ago; in other words, the fact that the story is set in the future is only trivial. The science fiction element is sort of icing on the cake, you might say—not really essential or important. Like the space opera stories that substituted spaceships for horses, ray-guns for six shooters, and Bug-Eyed-Monsters for Indians. It's "science fiction," yes, but nothing unique like "The Heyworth Fragment," or "Commuter Special." The science fiction in a story should be more than a cardboard background prop, I feel—the plot, the characters, etc., should flow from it, be intertwined in it, so that the story is uniquely sf, and can be told only as sf. That's my basic complaint against "Growing Up Fast in the

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**AMAZING**



(Continued from page 5)

ten dollars "at the door" to latecomers, was "to discourage walk-ins." These "walk-ins" are supposedly the strays who have little or no interest in sf, but hear about the convention and just stroll into the hotel out of curiosity. The psychology behind this reasoning is as faulty as the logic itself, but Los Angeles has continued the policy this year. In Boston's case it did *not* stem the number of last-minute members (their proportion differed little from that of previous years), but made them short-tempered. Not only were most of these so-called "walk-in" attendees legitimately interested in science fiction (many simply couldn't be sure of attendance until the last moment), but the Boston committee found itself embarrassed by the amount of surplus money the "non-profit" convention wound up with . . . after crying poor for years in advance.

The fact is that putting on a Worldcon these days is a multi-thousand-dollar experience. Even a conservatively financed convention will handle tens of thousands of dollars. One which sets out to exploit every source of money in sight could easily rake in monies in the twenty- to fifty-thousand-dollar range.

This constitutes a considerable temptation to some people. Even those who seek no profit for themselves gain ego-gratification ("egoboo") from handling such large sums, as Strauss pointed out in his letter. The mark of success becomes the gross sum of money taken in by the convention.

IT ALL GROWS OUT OF BIGNESS. But *why* have Worldcons suddenly exploded into this spurt of growth after years of relative stability?

One reason might be the surge of "respectability" science fiction is supposedly undergoing. The success of *Star Trek* certainly propelled a proportion of the newcomers into attendance, and the general media-penetration of sf has also helped.

But that alone does not fully explain it. There are other reasons. And one of them

is the stated policy of the Science Fiction Writers of America, an organization which represents almost every working sf writer in this country and which is determined to exploit the Worldcons for every ounce of favorable publicity available.

I can't condemn this policy. Viewed from the SFWA's side of the table, it is simply good sense. The Worldcon, although instituted by fans, and throughout the years run by fans, could not exist without the cooperation of the sf professionals. Nine-tenths of the programming at any Worldcon consists of professional sf writers giving talks or appearing on panel discussions. Most Worldcon attendees wouldn't be interested in anything else—as has been proven by the much smaller audiences for fan-oriented programming. Thus the Worldcons have exploited the pros—and the pros have exploited the Worldcons. The two exist in symbiosis.

Because Worldcons attract a large number of professional sf writers—many of whom come as much to enjoy the convention as anyone else—it was inevitable that the SFWA would begin holding meetings, first informal, then formal and sometimes including private "cocktail parties" or even banquets. And, following on the heels of these meetings, the SFWA established "press rooms," organizing publicity blitzes in the news media.

From the SFWA's point of view, this is the only intelligent course of action. The Worldcon is the science fiction world's largest and most visible annual event. The SFWA wants to see it taken out of the hands of the amateurs and properly exploited for the good of science fiction as a whole.

This is not a recently arrived at notion. Since 1952, and the first "big" Worldcon, dollar signs have glinted in the eyes of some who make their living from science fiction. In those far-gone days, the ideas were a bit more naive—they included a professional model who was to gain valuable column-inches in the newspapers as "Miss



Science Fiction"—but nonetheless potent. Fortunately (from the point of view of many fans, who viewed the promised circus with alarm), nothing came of it all—not until now, twenty years later. But the possibility still exists, and must be considered rationally:

Why not turn the Worldcon into an annual event designed *specifically* to promote science fiction? Why not, as Erwin Strauss suggests, hire a professional committee to run the convention? Why not let the Worldcon "turn pro"?

It certainly would not be the World Science Fiction Convention we've known and loved since 1939—but then, it hasn't really been that in recent years anyway. The crowds are too large to even *find* all your old friends—much less the new ones you'd like to meet.

I DISLIKE THE IDEA, myself, but that's my personal bias. Certainly, if the institution of a professional Worldcon would mean, even indirectly, higher sales for this magazine I'd be in a poor position to protest.

But the alternative would mean establishing a policy which might be offensive to many: limiting the Worldcon's attendance. Supposedly the high "at the door" fees are intended for that purpose. They don't work. What *will* work is to limit the *publicity* the Worldcon receives before and during the event.

I co-chaired the 1967 NyCon3, the 25th Worldcon. We foresaw a large attendance (the Worldcon had not been held in New York City for more than ten years) and strictly banned all local radio, television and newspaper coverage. (This made one minor radio personality who saw—and still sees—himself an "authority" on sf livid, and he attacked us several times on the air for our policy. Everyone else seemed to sympathize with our position, however.) This would run directly counter to present SFWA policy.

A second limitation—and one which would offend an equally large number of

people—would be to ban from the huckster tables sales of comics and movie posters and stills. At the NyCon3 we didn't do that, but we didn't slant any of our programming at the monster-film crowd either—and we were roundly cursed for it by them afterwards. But I don't think that a World Science Fiction Convention should be ecumenically based these days. The horror-film-buffs and comics fans are large in number and have their own conventions (and they're becoming more and more successful, too) and shouldn't expect to find themselves especially catered to at an sf convention too. Many ignore the programming for the huckster tables and lounging in the halls, and those whose interest in sf is nil would be doing everyone a favor if they didn't add to the congestion at the Worldcon.

If this was done—and advance publicity was limited to those publications (like this one) which are read exclusively by people interested in sf—I think the growth of the Worldcon could be reasonably contained without turning anyone away at the door.

The question, of course, is whether the majority of Worldcon attendees would favor such a move, or whether, in the long run, it would prove desirable.

IN THE MEANTIME, the potential for abuse is also growing yearly. Until very recently no one regarded conventions as money-making operations. And, until recently, they weren't. Fans put on conventions for the same idealistic reasons they published fanzines—for the sake of community and ego-boo. A convention was a place to bring everyone together. Everyone chipped in enough to pay expenses, and that was that. The smaller conventions had a harder time dealing with hotels, sometimes had to pay for meeting space, and often came out in the red with the local fanclub making up the difference. The convention handled a few hundred dollars—not thousands. Many of the regional conferences and conclaves



still operate on this basis, attracting only a few hundred attendees, sometimes less than a hundred.

But as Worldcons began hiking their membership fees, the smaller regional conventions have followed suit. The average regional convention charged only a dollar a head until a few years ago, but fees are now running an average of \$3.00, with \$5.00 and up not unheard of.

The potential for making a killing is there—and some are willing to exploit it. A year ago a fan in New York City whose previous convention experience was non-existent threw a “MondoCon” with a Big Name as guest of honor and very little else. The reported profits were comfortable, and not shared with any sponsoring clubs or donated to worthy causes. This year another New York fan—who wants to put on a Worldcon if he can—threw a *Star Trek* convention which achieved national publicity and reputedly became his major source of income. (Previously he had sold dirty eight-page comic reprints on 42nd St.) His interest in *Star Trek* began and ended with the profits to be made from the fans of that show—some 2,000 of whom registered in advance.

Worldcons are supposedly non-profit—and the excess monies taken in (there has been an excess for at least the last fifteen years, and recently it has run in the thousands) are supposed to be distributed fairly to the various worthy (and otherwise under-financed) causes in fandom. (In 1967 we gave a sum to the SFWA in appreciation of the cooperation we’d received—and because we knew the then-fledgling organization was running in the red. We also passed on money to the Trans-Atlantic Fan Fund, a fund set up to transport European fans to U.S. conventions and vice-versa; to a similar fund which had been launched to bring a Japanese fan to this country; to the Fan Art Show; and to several other groups and causes.) But there hasn’t been a financial

statement issued by any Worldcon since 1962 (a situation explained in part by lingering financial obligations, such as planned post-convention publication of official transcripts, etc.)—and it seems unlikely there will be any in the future. The potential for abuse is obvious and cannot be ignored much longer. (There are those who say we’ve already waited too long.) Fans whose interests lie in the money they can make from putting on a Worldcon are eagerly awaiting a grab at it. If they are allowed to gain control of any Worldcon, the results will assuredly be disastrous.

Obviously then, a choice must be made in the next year or two. The World Science Fiction Convention can go in one of several directions: into full-fledged professional operation, as an adjunct of the SFWA; into a tighter, more limited and more financially reasonable format; or allowed to find its own direction, willy-nilly, as it is doing now—with our prayers that the vultures can be kept away from it for the time being.

But we cannot sit back, complacent, hoping that the right thing will be done and taking no action.

If you want to involve yourself in the process of making this decision the time to do so is now. Join the 30th World SF Convention, the L.A.Con. It will be held this coming Labor Day weekend in Los Angeles. Membership is presently \$6.00 for a “supporting membership” (which allows you to vote for the Hugo, but does not include attendance) or \$8.00 for full membership. After August first, the fee will be \$10.00—and it will cost the difference between that and your supporting membership if you change your mind and decide to attend at the last moment. The address is L.A.Con, P.O. Box 1, Santa Monica, Ca. 90406. Tell ’em I sent you.

(You can also join the 31st Worldcon, the Torcon 2, which will be held over the Labor Day weekend in 1973. Until December 1, 1972, you can join for \$3.00 “supporting”



or \$5.00 for a full attending membership. From Dec. 1, 1972, to August 1, 1973, those fees are \$4.00 and \$7.00, and after August 1st and at the door, \$10.00. You'll note the Toronto convention starts out much cheaper and remains somewhat so, but still ends up at \$10.00 if you wait until the last minute. The Washington group, whose bid for the 1974 Worldcon under Jay Haldeman's leadership will be presented in Los Angeles, promises lower fees yet. I'd like to see this trend continue.)

OUR SCIENCE COLUMN, *The Science in Science Fiction*, is missing this issue, for the first time since it began appearing here with our November 1969 issue. It will be back

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mimeographed.

WARM HEART PASTRY #1, Winter, 1971; 35¢; irregular, from Neal Goldfarb, 30 Brodwood Dr., Stamford, Conn. 06902; 16 pp., mimeographed.

COVER #2, no date; 50¢ or 5/\$2; irregular, from Jeff Schalles, Box 288 Grove City College, Grove City, Pa. 16127; 54 pp., mimeographed.

NOLAZINE #12, Aug., 1971; no price listed; irregular, from Patrick H. Adkins, Box 8010, New Orleans, La. 70182; 28 pp., offset.

ANANT #1, Fall, 1971; no price listed; irregular, from Penny Hansen, 1607 Lincolnwood, Urbana, Ill. 61801; 18 pp., mim-

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City"—and I think it's Scott Edelstein's too, though he never expressed it this way.

CY CHAUVIN

17829 Peters

Roseville, Michigan 48066

*The question of price is not one I can deal with. However, let me point out that it is a recognized phenomenon that when a magazine raises its price, it loses a few sales—and sometimes more than a few. On the previous two occasions when this magazine raised its price (from 35¢ to 50¢ in the early sixties, and from 50¢ to 60¢ in 1969), it lost about ten thousand sales, each time. We are presently keeping*

next issue—Benford and Book simply couldn't find the time to finish a column for this issue. When they began the column they were co-workers at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Livermore, California, and in easy touch every day. David Book moved east to the Washington, D.C., area more than a year ago, and recently Greg Benford took a professorship in physics at the University of California at Irvine, in southern California. As a result, they no longer find collaborations as easy and—as you may have noticed—have taken to switching authorship back and forth, from column to column. In principle this allowed one to backstop the other. In practice, they both fell short this time out. —TW

eographed. Published by the University of Illinois SF Society.

TOMORROW AND . . . #8, no date; 50¢ or 5/\$2; irregular, from Jerry Lapidus, 54 Clearview Drive, Pittsford, NY 14534; 62 pp., mimeographed and offset. With this came *The Legal Rules* #4, a service publication for fandom, keeping everyone up-to-date on the rules of the worldcons.

Fanzines for review should be sent to: John D. Berry, 625 Scott, #607, San Francisco, Calif. 94117.

—JOHN D. BERRY

*our heads above water at 60¢; it might be disastrous to go to a higher price—we simply could not afford to lose another ten (or even five) thousand. But we shall see. As for "Growing Up Fast in the City," the question of whether or not it contained "essential" sf elements would seem to me to depend upon what you think the story is about.*

That wraps it up for another issue. Next issue, look for a truly startling view of Jupiter, as seen from the rocky slopes of Ganymede—our debut cover painting by Don Davis—and Greg Benford's long awaited novel, "Jupiter Project."—TW



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(Continued from page 54)

They were happy to take the *Jennylove* along and Pablo is looking mighty strange about that new girl at Big Jupe's so maybe we'll have a friend or two along, because the McCord

family just might tag along for that second part of the trip.

Civilization comes only too swiftly at its slowest.

—WILLIAM ROTSLER

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(Continued from page 37)

up and up.

"There is still freedom outside. There is always freedom somewhere, and there is always control somewhere. We had freedom once; it is gone now, but someday it will come again when the time is right. All is not lost, Edward. There is always compensation."

He reached a hand down. Heisk felt something burn cold on each side of his head, just above his ears.

Somewhere deep inside he was still screaming, but he could only lie dumb-

ly as Tanver bent close to an ear and whispered something into it.

And then he wanted to scream even more.

"Your government loves you." Like the banners hung in the windless air.

Tanver's hand rested on a switch. It took a long, long time to go down all the way.

There was a smell of electricity, and fire ate through his brain.

And after that, the darkness.

—ROBERT TAYLOR

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